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A RAND NOTE

Naval Arms Control:  
The Backdrop of History

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## Naval Arms Control: The Backdrop of History

## August 1990

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## **PREFACE**

As part of a study for the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy entitled "Framework, Concepts, and Analysis for Conventional Arms Control," RAND has been examining questions and options relating to the possible future inclusion of general purpose naval forces in East-West negotiations. The study has been conducted within the RAND Strategy Assessment Center, which is part of RAND's National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

This Note provides the historical background for the naval study. It examines the past record in naval arms control through early 1986. A companion Note, N-3121-USDP, published simultaneously, discusses the public diplomacy of naval arms control from 1986 to 1989.

## SUMMARY

Since early 1986, the Soviet Union has intensified its public diplomacy campaign to engage the United States and the Western allies in negotiations aimed at limiting naval forces and activities. The West's response to such overtures has up to now been firmly and consistently negative. The West's reluctance to place general purpose naval forces on the arms control table is based on many considerations—some of them strategic, but one of them historical. In a commonly held view, the United States and Britain fared badly in the naval agreements of the 1920s and 1930s. The Axis powers built up their navies in the 1930s, the democracies languished behind, and Germany and Japan were harder to defeat at sea during World War II precisely because of this unhappy record.

It is not only memories of the interwar period's naval agreements that trouble many in the West today. The entire subject seems to leave a bad aftertaste. Emblematic is the view expressed by the U.S. Chief of Naval Operations in 1988: "We should remember . . . that maritime nations have seldom benefited from naval disarmament treaties and never from unilateral disarmament. . . . [T]he Washington Naval Conference of the 1920s proved to be one of those misguided policies, so seductive in the present, so harmful to the future, that we have adopted all too often in our history; and that have led us step by descending step into the abyss of war."

But is the actual historical record as dismal and dysfunctional as many in the West remember it? The question is not trivial. Though more than bad memories of times past undergird reluctance in the West to consider naval negotiations, such memories have a powerful influence on present perceptions.

To retrace the trail of the past is to encounter a history that is more, less, and different in many respects than is sometimes remembered. First, the legacy is more extensive and varied, and less antique, than many current accounts acknowledge. The great naval disarmament experiments of the interwar period have their place in the history of naval arms limitations, but they are not the sum of that history, or even close to it, nor are they necessarily emblematic of its major characteristics. In a similar vein, though the period after 1940 has had fewer (or less ambitious) arms control activities in the naval arena, the record did not end at Pearl Harbor and is considerably more contemporary than some might remember it.

Second, the naval powers, including the United States, have at times found it in their interest to agree to limitations on their right to ply the waterways of the world. In this, they acknowledged that freedom of navigation can be enhanced as well as sometimes hamstrung by negotiated regulations. Anxieties about setting undesirable precedents are a part of the record; yet it is difficult to find evidence in the record that such precedents returned to haunt us. The United States itself was the initiator and champion of several naval agreements. Indeed, two of the widely acknowledged "successes" in naval arms control—the Rush-Bagot Treaty with Britain in 1817 and the U.S.-Soviet Incidents at Sea Agreement of 1972—originated with the United States.

Third, sweeping conclusions about past experience are risky, difficult to find consistent support for, and, by and large, wrong. Nothing in the historical record suggests that naval arms control (or any one naval arms control variant) is *prima facie* a good thing. Indeed, one can point to instances where, if anything, the reverse was more the case. At the same time, nothing in the record suggests that naval limitations are dysfunctional or opposed to the best interests of maritime nations. Though one can point to confused, violated, and ultimately unhappy specific arrangements, it cannot be said, for example, that the United States itself ever made a truly bad deal. Even in the case of Britain—whose bilateral naval agreement with Germany in 1935 is scarcely a model of vision and common sense—it was less what Britain agreed to than what it did (and failed to do) in the context of the agreement that mattered.

To suggest this, however, is simply to introduce a fourth observation. "Lessons" from the past in this area tend to be subtle and diffused. To begin with, there are nonlessons. These concern experiences that are either too remote in time and location or too idiosyncratic to yield much that is instructive in present circumstances. There are lessons to be drawn from naval agreements that never took place, or that never took effect operationally. The history of naval arms control is a history of debate and truncated false starts as much as it is a record of deals signed and sealed. What might have been but was not on occasion yields some useful insights. There are also lessons to be drawn from the aftermath of past agreements—what the parties did, whether other parties knew about and understood violations, and whether and how they reacted.

Fifth, the record in naval arms control is not greatly different from the record in other forms of military restraint. Success or failure cannot be isolated from the broader political issues joining or separating the parties. The Montreux Convention governing

passage through the Turkish Straits, for example, could not survive the opening of hostilities in Europe in 1939. By the same token, the Convention's terms could resume their place as soon as the war was over.

Last, while some in the postwar West make too light of the historical record, many in the East (and also in Europe) make too much. Although the aspirations have at times been near cosmic in their reach, most actual agreements have been very prosaic affairs. When viewed up close, they have seldom possessed the dark (or bright) mysteries that later accounts sometimes ascribe to them.

This Note retraces the larger steps along a path nearly two hundred years long, with emphasis on the twentieth century. Although the subject is naval arms control, the discussion is also about navies, naval power, and the strategy and politics that have woven together aspirations to unfetter sea power on the one hand, and inclinations to constrain that power on the other.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Two RAND colleagues, Paul Davis and William Schwabe, carefully reviewed and commented on earlier drafts. I alone am responsible for the shape and content of the final product.

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## GLOSSARY

AGNA	Anglo-German Naval Agreement
ANZUS	Mutual Security pact of Australia, New Zealand and United States
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ASW	Antisubmarine warfare
CDE	Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe
CFE	Negotiations on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe
CSBM	Confidence- and security-building measure
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
INCSEA	Agreement on the Prevention of Incidents on and over the High Seas
MBFR	Negotiations for Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions in Europe
METF	Middle East Task Force
SNA	Soviet land-based naval aviation
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Talks
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNDC	United Nations Disarmament Commission
WTO	Warsaw Treaty Organization

## I. INTRODUCTION

History with its flickering lamp stumbles along the trail of the past, trying to reconstruct its scenes, to revive its echoes, and kindle with pale gleams the passion of former days.

—Winston Churchill, November 1940<sup>1</sup>

The recent record of naval arms control agreements—that is, since World War II—is fairly small. Since 1945, much has been said about negotiating (or otherwise applying) limitations on naval forces, some of it has been vigorously debated, but little of it has taken actual form in binding, operationally consequential agreements. The prewar period is a different matter. Before 1939, and especially in the period between the wars, the major naval powers, including the United States, undertook several experiments in limiting, and in some cases reducing, naval armaments.

This Note forms part of a broader study of issues and U.S. options in the naval aspects of East-West arms control. Other parts of the study seek to better understand what U.S. policy toward naval negotiations might be in the period to come, by probing the strategical rationality and military and political desirability of alternative approaches. This Note is different. It is concerned exclusively with matters past—not with what U.S. policy ought to be but with what the policies of the United States and other naval actors have been in the past, why, and with what results. The discussion seeks to trace and explain major developments in the negotiation of naval limitations over the course of the past 150-plus years, with particular emphasis on the experience since the turn of the century. While the legacy is richest before the onset of World War II, the experience since 1945 is still instructive. For purposes here, the cutoff date is the mid-1980s.<sup>2</sup>

### THE IMMEDIATE BACKGROUND

Though the past is often used to introduce the present, it is helpful in this case to establish the context by briefly reversing the order. Since 1973, the Soviet Union, the

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<sup>1</sup>*Hansard*, November 12, 1940.

<sup>2</sup>A companion document, Lacy, 1990, picks up where this examination leaves off.

United States, their allies, and neutral and nonaligned countries of Europe have been engaged in nearly continuous negotiations aimed at reducing and regulating the activities of conventional military forces in Europe. By and large, naval forces have not been an element of negotiation. Proposals for limiting naval forces and activities have been a recurring feature of postwar Soviet public diplomacy; but for most of this period, their exclusion from the European talks was not a powerful issue—or at least not greatly debated—for either side.

This state of affairs began to change in early 1986. In the main, earlier Soviet naval overtures were opportunistic and propagandistic, and easily dismissible propaganda at that. Under President Mikhail Gorbachev, the public diplomacy, if nothing else, took on a sharper edge. The East has had more to say about naval arms limitations, more frequently, more persistently, and generally more skillfully. Whereas before, it was difficult to view Soviet naval proposals as anything more than a grand play for the benefit of the balcony, it was harder by mid-1988 to dismiss these overtures as flamboyant irrelevancies. The East began to draw explicit linkages between its aspirations in the naval sphere and the conduct and progress of conventional arms control on other fronts. The result, simply put, is that the issue will be much more difficult for the West to avoid in the future.

In March 1989, two new rounds of conventional force negotiations were inaugurated in Vienna within the general framework of the 35-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).<sup>3</sup> The "Conference on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe" (CDE) involves all 35 countries and is concerned chiefly with regulating the *activities* of military forces in Europe through the establishment of various "confidence- and security-building measures" (CSBMs). The 23-nation "Negotiations on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe" (CFE) is limited to members of NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) and is concerned primarily with altering and reducing the *structure* of the conventional forces of the two alliances in Europe. CDE is part of a much longer process of pan-European negotiations on security matters, economic issues, and human rights dating to the establishment of the CSCE in 1973 and to its early hallmark, the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. CFE is a new creation, successor to earlier bloc-to-bloc

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<sup>3</sup>The United States, Canada, the Soviet Union, and all European countries except Albania participate in the CSCE.

negotiations on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) in Europe (which began in 1973 and ended in February 1989 without much result), and is, by the parties' agreement, an "autonomous negotiation . . . within the CSCE framework."

At the opening session of the CDE on March 9, 1989, the WTO tabled an 11-point proposal dealing explicitly with naval subjects. The development was not entirely unexpected. At the earlier Stockholm round of CDE in 1986, the Soviet Union proposed to extend certain of the Stockholm Conference's CSBMs to naval forces. In the face of Western opposition, Mr. Gorbachev withdrew the proposal, but he made clear at the time that the East would introduce something similar in a later CDE round. In the months leading up to March 1989, the WTO signaled its intention to place naval CSBMs squarely on the CDE table.

The negotiating "mandate" for CFE provides explicitly that "naval subjects . . . will not be addressed"—a provision with which the WTO has not quarreled directly. Soviet spokesmen have insisted, however, that naval forces cannot be excluded indefinitely from the "framework" of negotiations—if not CFE, then some parallel forum—and have at times hinted that progress in CFE could be adversely affected unless the East gets some satisfaction from the West on naval arms control measures.

Beyond Vienna, there is little negotiating activity at present in the naval sphere. The United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) has entertained proposals dealing with naval arms control in the recent past, but the UNDC is traditionally more a venue for public pronouncements than a forum for specific negotiations. Apart from the inclusion of sea-based nuclear systems in the U.S.-Soviet "Strategic Arms Reduction Talks" (START) in Geneva and regular navy-to-navy consultations provided by the U.S.-Soviet "Incidents at Sea Agreement" (INCSEA) of 1972 and other agreements modeled upon it, no other forum currently exists to address naval issues. The last time the United States and the Soviet Union held bilateral discussions about constraints at sea was 1978, a short-lived and uneventful round about limiting naval presence in the Indian Ocean.

Though the East has focused a spotlight on the Vienna talks, its recent naval overtures (like those in its past) have not been confined to Europe. Indeed, much of what the Soviet Union has ventured in the naval sphere since 1986 aims quite specifically at other parts of the world. But as MBFR faded and CFE began to take form in 1988, Soviet spokesmen began to paint the linkage in bold colors—to European security in

general, and also to the European negotiations. "It is inadmissible to leave naval forces outside the framework of negotiations," Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze proclaimed to the UN General Assembly in June 1988. "This is a major global problem, but its resolution can and must be started at regional levels."<sup>4</sup> A month later, Admiral William Crowe, Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, ventured, "as we get more and more into conventional weapons, the Soviet Union is going to make a run on our navy."<sup>5</sup>

Thus far, the West's position with respect to naval negotiations has been to oppose them in all forums and all circumstances. "The firm position of the United States," the Director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency told a UN Committee in October 1988, is that "the United States cannot agree to any arms limitations or additional constraints on its naval activities."<sup>6</sup> The point was reinforced by the U.S. Secretary of State in September 1989. The United States repeated its "long-standing view that there are serious problems involved in any discussion of the limitation of naval arms."<sup>7</sup>

To judge by its public statements, the Soviet Union is not about to abandon its interests in or pressures for Western concessions on the naval front. In testimony before the House Armed Services Committee in July 1989, Marshal Sergei Akromeyev, Gorbachev's chief military adviser, suggested that "no drastic reductions in the armed forces and armaments of the world will be possible" unless the United States "will . . . accommodate our concerns with regard to naval forces."<sup>8</sup> In a more conciliatory tone in November, Akromeyev proclaimed that the time had come.

When the U.S. rejected negotiations on naval forces, the Soviet Union made a big concession and said it was willing to wait and hold negotiations on strategic weapons and armed forces in Europe. Little is said about this nowadays, but it gave a major impetus to the negotiations. If you consider

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<sup>4</sup>Address to the United Nations General Assembly Third Special Session on Disarmament, New York, June 8, 1988 (verbatim by U.S. Mission-UN).

<sup>5</sup>"U.S. Expects Soviet 'Run' on Navy," *International Herald Tribune*, July 2-3, 1988.

<sup>6</sup>William F. Burns, October 18, 1988, quoted in *Department of State Bulletin*, January 1989, p. 23.

<sup>7</sup>"Joint Statement of Secretary of State James A. Baker, III, and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, Jackson Hole, Wyoming," September 23, 1989, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup>"Statement to the U.S. Congress in July 1989 on the USSR stand in the field of national security for the 1990s," July 1989, p. 15 (English text).

this to be a concession, it was, but if it were not for this concession we would still be marching in place.

But this doesn't imply that the Soviet Union has dropped the idea of negotiations about naval forces. Today we say that the time has come. Maybe not tomorrow but, within a month, three months or half a year's time, we should begin.<sup>9</sup>

## RELEVANCE OF THE PAST

The West's reluctance to be drawn into naval discussions with the East is grounded in a many-threaded fabric of negotiating strategy, military concerns, and political misgivings. Some of the West's concerns are tactical; that is, were substantial progress to be made on other arms control fronts (in Vienna in particular), and were the Soviet Union and the WTO to become more precise in their naval overtures, certain objections would be held less keenly than at present. Some concerns are strategic—a maritime nation separated from its allies by ocean expanses simply cannot do without a plentiful range of naval capabilities, regardless of the potential for symmetrical balances of ground and air forces on the European continent. Some have to do with uncertainties about the wisdom and logic of mixing together seemingly very different things. Certainly on the face of it, there are difficulties in transferring an arms control concept applicable to ground forces in Europe to naval forces with a global reach. Traditionally, U.S. naval forces have been sized, equipped, and deployed not only with the Soviet threat in view, but also with the misbehavior of other states, often far removed from Europe, in mind. Put simply, global naval forces are not easily fitted with a regional arms control regime, even when, as in Vienna, the region is as large as Europe "from the Atlantic to the Urals."

Furthermore, remembrances in the West of past experience with naval arms limitations, especially the experience of the 1920s and 1930s, cast a long shadow over present perceptions of what is good and sensible in this area. To the generation that fought World War II, naval arms control was not a fond memory. In 1946, President Truman told a cabinet meeting that:

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<sup>9</sup>Akromeyev, *Time*, November 13, 1989, p. 58.

he would be in favor of disarmament once the major questions involved in a global plan were disposed of [but] that he was not willing to place the country in the position which it had been placed in by the 1922 [Naval Disarmament] Conference, namely, that of unilateral disarmament with the resulting weakening of our position in the world.

According to Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, who took the above notes, "All hands at the Cabinet agreed completely with [the President's] statement."<sup>10</sup>

Forty-plus years later, this remains the prevalent view. "We should remember that maritime nations have seldom benefitted from naval disarmament treaties and never from unilateral disarmament," the U.S. Chief of Naval Operations told the Baltimore Council on Foreign Affairs in 1988. The Washington Naval Conference of the early 1920s was "one of those misguided policies, so seductive in the present, so harmful to the future, that we have adopted all too often in our history; and that have led us step by descending step into the abyss of war."<sup>11</sup> Judgments from the past reinforce the view. Winston Churchill railed against the agreements at the time. Truman thought them terrible. Among prominent historians, Samuel Eliot Morison judged them to be "worse than useless . . . ; they merely served to lull the democracies into a false feeling of security, while giving the militarists elsewhere a chance to plot, plan, and prepare for a war that would enable them to divide the world."<sup>12</sup> In short, the United States went down the naval path once before, and nothing good came of it.

Whether the past truly is prologue in these circumstances remains to be seen. Given the perseverance of (generally bleak) postwar remembrances of the past, however, it is difficult to separate what went before from the present, or to avoid the past in looking ahead to future possibilities. If only indirectly, the past is part of the present.

## **A LOOK BACKWARD**

Yet to generalize about the historical experience in naval arms limitations, and to draw from it and apply overall conclusions, requires some care. The interwar experiments are not the sum of the experience, nor are they necessarily representative of the legacy. In actuality, the record of naval arms control has seldom been about "disarmament," let alone (save in the case of the vanquished in war) about "unilateral

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<sup>10</sup>Millis, 1951, p. 220.

<sup>11</sup>Trost, 1988; reprinted in *Vital Speeches*, Vol. 54, No. 14, May 1, 1988, p. 424.

<sup>12</sup>Morison, 1965, p. 264.

disarmament." The record did not end in 1939, nor has the United States always opposed naval negotiations in the postwar period. Even in the case of the agreements of the 1920s and 1930s (indeed, especially in that case), there is more and less to the evidence than later accounts tend to acknowledge. Viewed closely, the agreements were not quite the calamitous developments later remembered. In any case, it is scarcely a certainty that much of any importance would have been different or for the better in the absence of the agreements. "Never again" may be the most commonly accepted of several possible lessons that might be derived, but it is only one (and, on examination, scarcely the most logical or compelling). Other lessons, arguably closer to the actual events of the past and more relevant to present circumstances, can be drawn as well.

This examination retraces some of the larger and more important steps of the past. Not all of these resulted in naval arms control agreements. The history of arrangements sought and not achieved is as instructive in present circumstances as is the record of agreements signed. Though the U.S. experience in naval arms control is a prominent part of the telling, the reconstruction of events is not limited to arrangements in which the United States was a formal party. In much of the pre-World War II history (and in much of the postwar period also), the United States was not a key actor in the shaping of events.

The subject is general purpose naval forces. Strategic nuclear weapons based at sea have historically been dealt with within the special context of strategic arms negotiations. This Note does not consider such negotiations.

What follows draws upon unclassified contemporary and historical accounts. It is not a history of naval arms control in the strict sense of the term—no subject or period is treated exhaustively<sup>13</sup>—nor is it intended to substitute for the many excellent reconstructions upon which it is largely based. Instead, it aims to bring the general record up to date, to view it from the perspective of issues and questions that claim pertinence in present circumstances, and to clarify some of the thinking and patterns of decisionmaking that went before. It seeks to capture, from various perspectives, some of

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<sup>13</sup>The reader will find here, for instance, that the emphasis in much of the prewar period is on four players—the United States, Britain, Japan, and Germany—to the near-exclusion of others (France, the Netherlands, and Italy, for example) that could make equal claims for important notice in any thorough retrospective of twentieth century naval arms control.

the more instructive and important developments of the past as a foundation for better appreciating the larger backdrop against which present and future considerations will be judged.

## II. THE DISTANT PAST

It is sea power which is essential to every splendid people.

—U.S. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, March 1895<sup>1</sup>

For most of the nineteenth century, two naval facts were dominant. First, "Britannia, rule the waves" was not merely an invocation, it was also a declaration of indisputable fact. The British fleet was first among the world's navies, its supremacy at sea unmatched and virtually unchallenged across the globe. Second, it was not in any naval power's interest to limit naval capabilities *per se*—surely not in Britain's, but also not on the part of other countries that might want to match or overtake Britain. Such arms control as was attempted was largely a matter of regulating what navies did and where they did it, not how big or how capable they were or could grow to be.

In most of the naval agreements of the time, the United States was neither a direct party nor a source of influence. In several, to be sure, it really had no interest; the areas covered were too remote or the terms of agreement too parochial to matter. But the United States was scarcely a naval power of the first order and influence in any case. Though by 1890 it ranked first among the major powers in energy consumption, first in iron and steel production, and second only to Britain in relative share of world manufacturing output, its naval capabilities were in a decidedly lesser league. In 1880, Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, president of the U.S. Naval War College and the Clausewitz of naval warfare, judged the U.S. Navy to be a poor match against Chile's naval forces, let alone those of Spain or the great British fleet. The problem, Grover Cleveland's Secretary of the Navy said in 1887, was that the American Navy had neither the strength to fight nor the speed to run away.<sup>2</sup>

By the early years of the twentieth century, this state of affairs had changed in several respects. The torpedo and the mine extended the range and altered the content of naval warfare; experiments with the submarine gave rise to a new potential that would greatly affect the conduct and character of war at sea. Under the influence of Mahan's

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<sup>1</sup>Garraty, 1953, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup>Kennedy, 1987, pp. 201, 202; Tuchman, 1967, pp. 153–154.

abundant writings, the lesser naval powers developed an affection for sea power and the naval shipbuilding programs to go with it. Britain's status as first among navies was no longer accepted as a present or a permanent condition; Germany, Japan, and the United States each launched competitive naval programs. Britain, in turn, found it more congenial to think in terms of naval limitations as a way of curbing the emerging German naval program in particular and preserving the status quo in general. The United States, generally supportive of Britain on questions of naval limitation, but historically at odds with London in matters of blockades, seizures, and neutrals' versus belligerents' rights, walked its own path through the multiparty naval negotiations centered at The Hague and in London in the prewar years. Russia, which had called for sweeping disarmament at the First Hague conference in 1899, wanted no part of the subject at the Second Conference in 1907, nor did Germany, Japan, and Austria. At the onset of war in Europe in 1914, the neutral United States was the champion of compliance with naval agreements previously reached and agreements discussed but never entered into force. Having bolstered its own naval strength once, at the turn of the century, the United States launched a yet more ambitious ten-year shipbuilding program in the "Big Navy" act of 1916, aimed at giving the United States "the most adequate navy in the world."

World War I did not cool enthusiasm for returning to naval negotiations. Indeed, the prewar developments made it a near-certainty that naval arms control would be promptly and more ambitiously still on the agenda shortly after the war.

### **FIRST, DURABLE, CREAKY**

The one important nineteenth century naval agreement to which the United States was a direct party was a U.S. initiative in the wake of the U.S.-British war of 1812-1814. In the Rush-Bagot Agreement of 1817, the United States and Britain (later joined by Canada) agreed to set permanent limitations on naval deployments and ship construction on the American Great Lakes.<sup>3</sup> Each side was limited to four ships of not more than 100 tons, and their cannon to not more than 18 pounds each. First of the major naval agreements of the modern period, Rush-Bagot has certainly been the most enduring (it is still in effect nearly 175 years later) and is often cited as probably the most successful

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<sup>3</sup>Exchange of Notes Relative to Naval Forces on the American Lakes, 1817.

arms control agreement in recorded history.<sup>4</sup> This is not, however, because of an unmarred record of compliance. Confronting the insurrection activities of the Canadian Patriots in 1838, Britain quite conspicuously increased its naval forces on the Great Lakes and turned a deaf ear to American protests. Fifteen years later, the United States did likewise to counter Confederate raiders based in Canada. Though violations in subsequent years only once reached the point where one of the parties seriously considered withdrawing from the agreement entirely, this small, strategically marginal arrangement was nevertheless, in the words of Canadian historian James Eayers

not the example of successful arms control it is popularly supposed to be. . . . [It has] an unknown history of almost continuous violations, and a succession of negotiations designed to reconcile violations with the spirit of the agreement.<sup>5</sup>

Still, the flashpoint was nearly reached only once. In 1922 Canadian Prime Minister MacKenzie King complained that "our American friends have been steadily evading the . . . Agreement which . . . has become more or less of a mockery."<sup>6</sup> McKenzie King proposed a replacement treaty, which the United States ignored and in which Canada soon lost interest.

## OTHER EARLY ACCORDS

There is no evidence that the rest of the world paid Rush-Bagot any attention at the time, but the Great Lakes agreement was followed in subsequent years by a small number of similar "demilitarization" arrangements in Europe and South America (Fig. 1). Typically, these concerned inward or land-bound water areas, contemplated more than warships, and sought to denude the covered area of all military fortification and activity. In the Paris Peace Conference of 1856, the Bosphorus was closed to all warships, Turkey and Russia agreed not to establish or maintain any military-maritime arsenals on their shorelines, and neither was to maintain in the Black Sea any warships other than six steam vessels and four light vessels of designated length and tonnage.<sup>7</sup> The 1878 Treaty

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<sup>4</sup>See, e.g., Blechman, 1974, pp. 31-32.

<sup>5</sup>Eayers, 1964, p. 373.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted in Ranger, 1987, p. 55.

<sup>7</sup>These last provisions concerning the Black Sea did not last long, however, and were largely abrogated by the London Treaty of 1871.

of Berlin imposed similar bans on warships in the territorial waters of Montenegro and applied nonfortification provisions to the lower Danube.

The United States had little or no interest in these regional agreements, had neither the means nor the incentive to dispute them, and accepted them as remote, insignificant facts. A second form of accord during the period was (or would soon be) of much more direct interest to the United States, a series of early agreements to regulate the rules of naval warfare. The 1856 Declaration of Paris, following the Crimean War, established the general principle that, except for the contraband of war, enemy goods on neutral vessels and neutral goods on enemy vessels were not to be seized by belligerents, and that to be binding on third countries, blockades had to be effectively imposed.<sup>8</sup> At the First Hague Conference in 1899, after considerable watering-down at the insistence of the British delegation, the rules of the Geneva Red Cross Convention of 1868 regarding the treatment of prisoners and the wounded were extended, in generalized fashion, to

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1817	Rush-Bagot. Limitation of naval armaments in the Great Lakes area.
1856	Paris Peace Treaty. Demilitarization of the Black Sea and the Aaland Islands in the Baltic Sea; Straits of Dardenelles and the Bosphorus closed to warships.
1863	Treaty of London. "Neutralization" of the Ionian Islands.
1871	Treaty of London. Largely abrogated demilitarization of the Black Sea provisions of Paris Treaty of 1856.
1878	Treaty of Berlin. Nonfortification and "denavalization" of the Lower Danube; territorial waters of Montenegro closed to warships of all nations.
1881	Treaty of Buenos Aires (Argentina/Chile). Demilitarization of the Magellan Straits.
1905	Treaty of Portsmouth. Nonfortification of Sakhalin and adjacent islands.

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SOURCE: United Nations, Department of Disarmament Affairs, *The Naval Arms Race*, 1986, pp. 4-5, 88.

Fig. 1—Naval demilitarization treaties, 1817–1905

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<sup>8</sup>The latter principle evidently was aimed at token blockades meant to accomplish more than the blockading state was actually prepared to commit to the effort.

maritime warfare.<sup>9</sup> At the Second Hague Conference in 1907, eight of the 13 adopted conventions of war dealt explicitly with the law of naval warfare and neutrality. Set forth in extraordinary detail, the eight were intended to cover every possible means of injuring an enemy at sea. Various, they prohibited the use of underwater contact mines (unless harmless one hour after being laid), set forth rules governing naval bombardment of shore establishments, restricted the conversion of merchant ships to warships, and established procedures for an international prize court for ships and cargo seized. With somewhat better success than in 1899, the Second Conference more precisely adapted to naval warfare the earlier Geneva Conference's principles regarding the wounded, sick, and shipwrecked.

## SEA POWER AND ARMS RACES

The later nineteenth century agreements were formed against a backdrop in which the British example was becoming less a matter of awe and more one of emulation and emerging competition. It was Mahan, a captain with a keen instinct for history and strategy, who served as the principal catalyst.

In 1880, when discussion within the United States turned serious about constructing a canal across the Panama Isthmus, Mahan was the first, most urgent, and most vocal to warn that, without a vastly strengthened naval capability, the venture would prove to be more a danger than an asset for the United States. "We must without delay begin to build a navy which will at least equal that of England when the Canal shall have become a fact. . . . That this will be done I don't for a moment hope but unless it is we may as well shut up about the Monroe Doctrine at once."<sup>10</sup> The broader, more powerful, and instantly more consequential message came ten years later. In *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783* (1890), Mahan argued (convincingly for the audience at the time) that the nation that controls communications by sea controls

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<sup>9</sup> Britain's protest was carried by Lord Admiral John Fisher, who loudly derided attempts to humanize war ("You might just as well talk about humanizing Hell!") and who took strong exception to any legal requirement to rescue enemy sailors from the water after battle. A report by Fisher's chief of staff, quoted by Tuchman, applauded the success of Fisher's vigorously posed objections: "Thanks to the energetic attitude and persistent efforts of Sir John Fisher all provisions of the original articles which were likely in any way to fetter or embarrass the free action of the Belligerents have been carefully eliminated." Stead, 1910, p. 117; Tuchman, 1967, pp. 302, 305.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Tuchman, 1967, p. 153.

the situation in peace and war. Command of the seas was the chief element in the power and prosperity of nations. For a nation strategically situated like the United States, the proposition was all the more significant.

[I]f a nation be so situated that it is neither forced to defend itself by land nor induced to seek extension of its territory by way of land, it has, by the very unity of its aim directed upon the sea, an advantage as compared with a people one of whose boundaries is continental.<sup>11</sup>

Within the United States, Mahan's prescriptions found quick, enthusiastic endorsement from several quarters. Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge were most notable among the enthusiasts. Mahan refined and repeated the message in the next several years. In the *Atlantic Monthly* he argued that America's historical indifference to far-removed events was over. "Whether they will or no, Americans must now begin to look outward."<sup>12</sup> In 1893, when U.S. annexation of Hawaii was a salient issue, he urged that it was "imperative to take possession, when it can righteously be done, of such maritime positions as contribute to secure command," and argued that Hawaii "fixes the attention of the strategist."<sup>13</sup> Lest the message be missed, in 1897 he collected his major articles of the preceding seven years in a volume intended to make all such points unmistakable.<sup>14</sup>

In the face of Mahan's message, and on the heels of the goading by Roosevelt, Lodge, and others, the U.S. Navy at last began to build. "Reluctantly and not without strong objections from inside and out," Congress in 1890 authorized construction of three new battleships: the *Oregon*, *Indiana*, and *Massachusetts*. In 1892, it authorized a fourth, the *Iowa*. These were of the 10,000-ton class, with four 13-inch guns and eight 8-inch guns, an average speed of 15 knots and a cruising radius of 5,000 miles. "In combination of armor and firepower they represented the best in design and construction of the time."<sup>15</sup> They were a match for Britain's first-line ships, whose *Majestic* class battleships were 15,000 tons with four 12-inch guns and twelve 6-inch guns.

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<sup>11</sup>Mahan, 1957, p. 29.

<sup>12</sup>A. T. Mahan, "The United States Looking Outward," *Atlantic Monthly*, December 1890, cited in Tuchman, 1967, p. 149.

<sup>13</sup>Mahan, 1893.

<sup>14</sup>Mahan, 1897.

<sup>15</sup>Tuchman, 1967, p. 155.

Mahan's influence was not limited to the United States. In 1898, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany, another instant disciple, boldly proclaimed that for this traditional land power, "our future lies upon the ocean."<sup>16</sup> Wilhelm ordered that copies of Mahan's 1890 treatise be placed on every German naval vessel. The German Naval Law of 1900 reflected the enthusiasm. It called for 19 new German battleships and 23 cruisers in the next 20 years. Japan was also impressed. *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* was translated and adopted as a text in Japanese military and naval colleges; all of Mahan's subsequent publications were also translated into Japanese.

Still, Britain was not easily challenged. Since 1889, it had been committed to what it called the "two-power naval standard"—Britain's navy was to be as great as any two other navies combined. In October 1905, the keel of *HMS Dreadnought*, first of her class, was laid. At 18,000 tons and powered by new steam-turbine engines, the dreadnought class carried ten 12-inch guns and was larger, faster and more heavily armed than any other battleship in the world. Its influence was immediate. (In Tuchman's phrase, the dreadnought "made all existing fleets, including Germany's, obsolete, besides demonstrating Britain's confidence and capacity to rebuild her fleet.")<sup>17</sup> But neither the United States nor Germany was prepared to wander in perpetual second-class status. In January 1907 President Theodore Roosevelt requested, and the Congress authorized, the building of two ships of the new class. Germany soon followed suit. The Kaiser announced that he would not only match the British dreadnought, he would also widen the Kiel Canal to permit passage of the huge new fleet he was building. In 1908, Britain upped the ante by approving four new dreadnoughts. In 1909 it approved the construction of four more.

## THE FATE OF DISARMAMENT

In formally summoning the First Hague Conference in August 1898, Czar Nicholas II of Russia called grandly for a conference that would result in a substantial limitation, if not also reduction, in the world's armaments. Russia's first proposal was for a five-year moratorium on all arms buildups. Germany promptly declared that it would have nothing to do with a moratorium and would not be a party to arms limitations of any kind. Japan, according to a British report of the conference, "will only listen

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 321.

when she has reached the standard of the great naval powers, that is to say, never."<sup>18</sup> Britain was more conciliatory. Admiral Fisher was fiercely opposed—"the supremacy of the British Navy is the best security for the peace of the world"<sup>19</sup>—but the British government itself was not ill-disposed to naval limitations (as a means to curb Germany's naval program), provided that a formula could be found for inspection and control (a proposition that Fisher instantly declared "absolutely unrealisable"). The United States more or less sided with the official British position (though Mahan, part of the U.S. delegation, assured Fisher and others that the United States would in no circumstances even discuss naval limitations), but like Britain, found nothing specific to its liking, on grounds of either unverifiability or unacceptable intrusions on national sovereignty.<sup>20</sup> The only weapon development specifically banned by the Conference (by a vote of 22 to 2, with Britain and the United States opposed) was an army cartridge in use by Britain in policing its overseas possessions against home-grown insurgencies: the dum dum (or expanding) bullet.

On matters of naval disarmament, then, the First Hague Conference, which opened on May 18, 1899, never came close. Its results, in Tuchman's crisp summary, were

three Conventions: on Arbitration; Laws and Customs of War on Land; and Extension of the Geneva Rules to Maritime Warfare; three Declarations: on Projectiles from Balloons, Asphyxiating Gases, and Expanding Bullets; six "Wishes" for future accomplishment; and a Resolution.<sup>21</sup>

The resolution was the only thing that spoke to disarmament. It noted the desirability of limiting military expenditures and new types of weapons. It expressed the opinion of the conference that these be made the subject of "further study."

The Second Hague Conference, convened in 1907, had no better success with the issue, though the parties were aligned somewhat differently. President Theodore Roosevelt, who proposed the conference, began with a definite idea but lost interest in

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 303.

<sup>19</sup>Bacon, 1929, p. 121.

<sup>20</sup>Citing improper invasion of sovereignty in one conference committee after another, Mahan successfully opposed proposals to limit, variously, the caliber of naval guns, the velocity of projectiles, and the thickness of armor plate.

<sup>21</sup>Tuchman, 1967, pp. 311–312.

the face of stiff opposition from Britain. Roosevelt's idea was to limit the size of battleships rather than naval budgets, a notion that he thought would comfortably freeze the status quo in Britain's favor with regard to Germany and Japan. But the dreadnought class was already a keen interest for the United States, Britain did not warm to the specific idea, and Germany quickly rejected it as a U.S./British ploy to freeze-in their own battleship programs while freezing out Germany from catching up. Britain's Liberal Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, remained in favor of a freeze on naval spending and a general freeze on naval armaments, a position shared by U.S. Secretary of State Elihu Root, but not by President Roosevelt, whose interest in the conference itself rapidly waned. For Roosevelt, naval disarmament should be kept on the agenda, if only (probably only) for the sake of public opinion. Public opinion, however, sent Germany, Austria, and Russia in the opposite direction out of fear that any discussion of the issue might somehow trap them in an unfavorable position.

After months of jockeying, the Second Conference was finally announced without disarmament on the agenda. In their formal acceptances to participate, Britain, the United States, and Spain reserved the right to bring up the subject of disarmament; Germany, Russia, and Austria reserved the right to abstain or withdraw if the subject was mentioned. The various reservations mattered little. The subject was stillborn.

These were large multilateral efforts. That they accomplished next to nothing is scarcely surprising in this light.<sup>22</sup> But bilateral attempts involving the naval powers fared no better. By 1912, London's anxieties about Germany's shipbuilding program were palpable. In the report to the Committee on Imperial Defence that year by the newly installed First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill, there could be no mistaking where Germany was headed:

The whole character of the German fleet shows that it was designed for aggressive and offensive action of the largest possible character in the North Sea or the North Atlantic. . . . The structure of the German battleships shows clearly that they are intended for attack and for fleet action. They are not a cruiser fleet designed to protect colonies and commerce all over the world. They have been preparing for years, and continue to prepare . . . for a great trial of strength.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>The First Hague Conference had 108 delegates representing 25 nations; the second, 256 delegates representing 44 nations.

<sup>23</sup>Quoted in Manchester, 1983, p. 415.

In April 1912, Churchill proposed that the two countries agree to a "Naval Holiday," during which they would both suspend the laying of new keels. The Kaiser promptly rejected the idea. Such an arrangement, he retorted, could be reached only between allies. Churchill resurrected the proposal again in October 1913, advising the British cabinet at the time of its transmittal to Berlin:

The simultaneous building by so many powers great and small of capital ships, their general naval expansion, are causes of deep anxiety to us. . . . Naval strength to other powers is a mere panache. But as the frog said to the boy in the fable, "It is sport to you; it is death to us."<sup>24</sup>

This time, Germany did not even acknowledge the proposal. Two months later, Churchill submitted (for 1914) what was then the largest naval budget in British history. It was also, at the time, the largest in the world.<sup>25</sup>

There was nevertheless a naval disarmament agreement of sorts reached during this period, though at considerable distance from Europe and The Hague. In the *Pactos de Mayo* of 1902, Argentina and Chile agreed to cancel existing orders for naval warships and to give each other advance notice of any new construction. The agreement remained in effect for six years.

## **RULES OF NAVAL WARFARE REVISITED**

The Second Hague Conference did much better with questions of how to fight at sea, but not well enough. A Third Hague Conference was scheduled for 1915. In 1908, however, a smaller group of nations met in conference in London to further clarify and codify the rules of neutrals' rights and belligerents' prerogatives. The result was the London Declaration of 1909.<sup>26</sup>

The effect of the Declaration was to favor neutrals' right to trade as against belligerents' right to blockade. By the terms, only a belligerent who declared a blockade could seize "absolute contraband," which meant articles for military use only; articles for

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 449.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 449-450.

<sup>26</sup>Joining in the London Declaration of 1909 were all the nations that would be belligerents in 1914, plus the United States, Holland, Spain, and Italy.

either military or civilian use could be seized only if an enemy destination was proved; and purely civilian goods, including food, could not be seized at all. But the London Declaration ran into fierce political resistance in, of all places, London, and never entered into force. Sir Edward Grey instructed Britain's delegates that Britain could not assent to a principle that "if carried to its logical conclusion would entail the abolition of the commercial blockade."<sup>27</sup> For Britain, it was essential to preserve the right to capture free of restrictions. (Germany, however, argued for the use of submarines and contact mines as proper weapons to counter blockades.) Arthur Balfour, the British Prime Minister, joined with others in opposing the Declaration as a "German plot" that would "nullify" the British fleet. In what Tuchman has characterized as "perhaps their most dynamic act of the twentieth century," the British House of Lords torpedoed the Declaration by refusing to allow it to come to a vote.<sup>28</sup>

Officially, the United States favored the Declaration's tilt toward neutrals' rights. It fought the British in 1812 specifically in defense of its unfettered freedom of navigation and neutral rights against blockades and seizures. But the Union Navy imposed its own naval blockade on the Confederacy in 1862-1865 (a fact Britain pointedly though privately noted in 1909) and ignored the naval presence limitations of Rush-Bagot to counter confederate raids across the Great Lakes. At London, its chief delegate was Mahan, who viewed unrestrained sea power as the superior interest in any contest with neutrals' rights of commerce. Mahan's objections were overruled by his civilian colleagues, but they contributed to Britain's lack of endorsement of the Declaration. For Mahan and his disciples, the argument was compelling. In Tuchman's phrase, "what use was it . . . to deny use of the seas to the enemy if neutrals were to be allowed to supply him with all his needs?"<sup>29</sup>

The issue was not dormant for long. Though never entered into force, and thus not technically binding on any of the parties, the London declaration was still "the collected testimony of nations on the subject."<sup>30</sup> Trade with Europe was a cornerstone of the U.S. economy and cut across the divisions that would take form in August 1914. (In 1914, U.S. trade with Britain and France totaled approximately \$824 million; with the Central Powers, about \$169 million.) On August 6, 1914, the second day of war in Europe, the United States formally requested all belligerents to declare their adherence to

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<sup>27</sup>Tuchman, 1967, p. 335.

<sup>28</sup>Tuchman, 1976, pp. 371-372.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 371.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 372.

the Declaration's terms. Germany and Austria agreed on condition that their enemies would do likewise. Britain equivocated. It would comply with the London Declaration but reserved for itself rights "essential to the efficient conduct" of its naval operations.

For Britain, Germany and the United States, the next two years were a time of both delicate and clumsy jockeying around the issue. Britain's priority was to impose a leak-proof naval blockade on the Central Powers. With the development of submarines and floating mines, close blockades of ports were now very dangerous, if not suicidally obsolete. A distant blockade, however, made it difficult to prove the destination of a ship for purposes of lawful seizure under the London Declaration's terms. A Committee of Imperial Defence had already proposed (in 1912) that the ultimate destination of goods, and not of the ships that carried them, should be the single criterion. For Britain, then, a concept of "continuous voyage" would be applied, whereby the Royal Navy would seize ships "on any sufficient evidence" that the ultimate destination of their goods was hostile. But this placed Great Britain squarely at odds with the neutral United States. For Britain, a tight blockade of Germany was essential if it were to win; but, given its dependence on the United States for wartime trade, American ill-will would make defeat certain.<sup>31</sup>

Germany's dilemma was even more acute. With a force of 24 dreadnoughts to Germany's 16, the British blockade was able to contain the German surface fleet largely in port. For its part, Germany offered little direct resistance. Its immediate concern was to control the Baltic against a possible Russian thrust at the German coast. But the Kaiser, having invested heavily in a surface fleet, also had no intention of risking the investment in something so chancy as a high seas contest with the Royal Navy. The strategy Germany thus adopted was to maintain a "fleet-in-being" in an impregnable, fortified position on the theory that, posing a constant potential danger to Britain, the in-port fleet would usefully (for Germany) drain and distract Britain's naval resources. With two small exceptions the German High Seas Fleet, with 16 dreadnoughts, 12 older battleships, 3 battle cruisers, 17 other cruisers, and 140 destroyers, remained either in port or in the Baltic for the war's duration.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Morison, 1965, pp. 177-180.

<sup>32</sup>Elsewhere in the world, however, German naval units were active. A squadron of fast cruisers under Maximilian Von Spee roamed the Pacific Ocean, sinking British freighters almost at will. (Von Spee also annihilated a British force off the Chilean coast, but his entire squadron was later sunk in the waters off the Falklands.) The cruiser *Emden* shelled Madras in the Bay of Bengal and destroyed 15 allied merchantmen in the approaches to Ceylon (it was sunk subsequently by an Australian cruiser). Manchester, 1983, pp. 484-485.

In these circumstances, only German submarines (of which Germany possessed 27 in 1914) had access to the open waters of the Atlantic. At first, Germany confined its submarine attacks to British warships. Soon appreciating the squeezing effects of the British blockade, the German Emperor announced a retaliatory scheme in February 1915. Henceforth, the waters around the British Isles constituted a "war zone" in which any merchant ship attempting to trade with the Allies would be destroyed. On May 7, a German submarine sank the passenger liner *Lusitania* with a loss of 1,100 civilians, including 128 Americans. In its protest, the United States challenged the legality of any such "war zone," an idea that it said was unheard of in earlier wars.

For the United States, the difficulty was to navigate between its growing sympathies for, and increasing trade with, the Allies and its posture of neutrality and policy of unfettered navigational rights.<sup>33</sup> For President Woodrow Wilson, "freedom of navigation" was still a good principle but not the dominant consideration. The United States protested British arrests of American vessels (at one particularly contentious point, Wilson is reported to have been troubled by the thought that he might be the second Princeton president after Madison to lead the country to war with Britain over the issue),<sup>34</sup> but the duel with the UK was largely a shadow duel. Britain paid war prices for all neutral cargoes seized in its blockade, and no neutral lives were lost. German submarines, however, destroyed what they encountered. It would be German submarine warfare, and the German concept of an open-ended war zone, not Britain's blockade or Britain's deviation from the unratified London Declaration, that would bring the United States into the war.

### THE "MOST ADEQUATE NAVY IN THE WORLD"

Spurred by the *Lusitania* sinking, the United States returned to building its own naval ships, but with considerably enlarged ambition. The plan, Wilson said, was to build "incomparably the most adequate navy in the world."<sup>35</sup> In August 1916, the U.S. Congress enacted the "Big Navy Act," embodying a ten-year plan of naval construction

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<sup>33</sup>U.S. trade with the Allies had always been larger than with the Central Powers. This became even more the case as the war progressed. By 1916, U.S. trade with Britain and France had risen to \$3 billion; its trade with Germany and Austria declined from \$169 million in 1914 to about \$1 million in 1916.

<sup>34</sup>Tuchman, 1976, p. 376.

<sup>35</sup>Morison, 1965, p. 263.

to make the United States Navy equal to any two others in the world. In September, Congress also passed the "United States Shipping Board Act," appropriating \$50 million for the purchase and construction of additional merchant ships. To judge by what followed, Germany was unimpressed. On January 31, 1917, following Wilson's "Peace Without Victory" speech, the German ambassador advised the United States that wholly unrestricted submarine warfare would commence the following day. All German submarines would be instructed to attack at sight any American or other neutral ship, armed or unarmed, in the war zone around the British Isles and in the Mediterranean.<sup>36</sup> On March 18, three unarmed American merchantmen were sunk without warning. On April 6, the United States declared war.

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<sup>36</sup>Germany abandoned its initial submarine campaign in September 1915, partly because of negative international reaction to the *Lusitania* sinking, but also because of the small tonnage sunk and the number of U-boats lost (about one for every 20 ships destroyed). By February 1917, it had nearly 100 submarines in its inventory. By July 1917, it was sinking 600,000 tons of allied shipping monthly.

### III. THE INTERWAR PERIOD

The whole principle of naval fighting is to be free to go anywhere with every damned thing the Navy possesses.

—First Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher (Ret.),  
United Kingdom, 1919<sup>1</sup>

Fisher's muscular assertion no doubt expressed the viewpoint of many naval officers in the immediate wake of the war, but it fit poorly with the temperament of the time. Within two years, Britain would itself propose the first of the major naval disarmament conferences of the interwar years.

At the end of World War I, the world's naval powers could be grouped in three categories: major (United States, Britain, Japan), medium (France, Italy), and minor (China, Belgium, Holland, Portugal). The German navy was effectively disarmed in the Treaty of Versailles. Japan's navy was unaffected by the war. On August 14, 1914, Japan declared for the Allies, freeing large numbers of Russian forces for the fight in Europe and, at the same time, providing Japan the opportunity to impose its Twenty-One Demands on China and intrude upon Chinese territory and sovereignty.

Though the Japanese navy had to be a concern to Britain, so was the American navy. If fully implemented, the "Big Navy" Act of 1916 would give the United States a navy that a war-weary and financially hard-pressed Britain could not hope to match. Strategically, this might seem to be a welcome development, relieving the Royal Navy of some of its worldwide responsibilities. London did not see it this way. The American program, even more than Japan's, was a direct challenge to British naval supremacy.

For Lloyd George, Britain's Prime Minister, the preferable course lay in the convening of a new naval conference to deal specifically with matters of naval disarmament. The conference, called by Britain, opened in Washington on November 12, 1921.<sup>2</sup> Though London's idea, the initiative was quickly captured by Washington. At the opening session, Secretary of State Charles Evan Hughes "astounded the

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<sup>1</sup>Fisher, 1919, p. 197.

<sup>2</sup>Participating were Britain, Japan, the United States, France, Italy, China, Belgium, Holland, and Portugal.

conference and electrified the world" by announcing that the United States was prepared to scrap new naval construction, on which it had already spent \$300 million, if Britain and Japan would do the same.<sup>3</sup>

Most dramatic of the naval arms control developments of the interwar period, the Washington Conference of 1921–1922 formed only part of a larger mosaic. The years between 1919 and 1936 were a time of more of the same kinds of agreements attempted before World War I, but considerably more, and considerably more ambitious. The water areas subject to naval restrictions were broader, the submarine came in for special attention, and, in the Washington and the later London Treaties, the major sea powers agreed to unprecedented limitations on their present and future naval inventories.

### THE BLACK SEA REVISITED

In 1920 and 1921, limited "demilitarization" was again attempted in a few areas (Fig. 2). The major effort, however, concerned the Black Sea. "Demilitarization" of the Turkish Straits and the Black Sea had been tried in the Paris Peace Treaty of 1856 but lasted only about 15 years and was largely abrogated by the 1871 Treaty of London. The postwar Lausanne Conference of 1923 demilitarized the Turkish straits by placing them under international control. The next Black Sea agreement—the Montreux Convention of 1936—arose out of pressures from Turkey to lift restrictions on its sovereignty imposed following its defeat in the war.

The Montreux Convention<sup>4</sup> returned the straits to Turkish military control, but it balanced this with explicit regulations governing access of all other nations through the Straits to the Black Sea. Warships of the littoral states are largely unfettered in their movements by the Convention's provisions.<sup>5</sup> Non-Black Sea navies:

- Cannot send capital ships and submarines into the Black Sea.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Morison, 1965, p. 263.

<sup>4</sup>Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits with Protocol Signed at Montreux, 1936.

<sup>5</sup>The present tense is deliberate. The convention has since technically expired, but its provisions are still generally complied with.

<sup>6</sup>Capital ships are defined in annex II of the convention as surface vessels of war, other than aircraft carriers, which either (1) exceed 10,000 tons displacement *or* carry a gun with a caliber exceeding 8 inches, or (2) exceed 8,000 tons displacement *and* carry a gun with a caliber exceeding 8 inches.

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- 1920 Paris Treaty on Spitzbergen. Norway not to establish any naval bases or other fortifications on the islands.
- 1920 Peace Treaty of Dorpat. Demilitarization of Finnish territorial waters in Finnish Gulf, Arctic Ocean, and Lake Ladoga.
- 1921 Aaland Islands Convention. Confirmation and extension of provisions of 1856 Paris Peace Treaty.
- 1922 Washington Treaty. Numerical and qualitative restrictions on warships of five major sea powers; spheres of influence and future base limitations in Pacific; restrictions on submarines (not entered into force).
- 1923 Peace Treaty of Lusanne. Demilitarized zones along shores of Straits of Dardenelles and Bosphorus; demilitarized islands in sea of Marmara; demilitarization of two island groupings in Aegean Sea.
- 1930 Greek-Turkish Naval Protocol. Exchange of information on prospective changes in naval inventories.
- 1930 First London Treaty. Additions to and refinements of 1922 Washington Treaty, including sublimits and lower tonnage limitations on aircraft carriers; reaffirmation of 1922 restrictions on submarines (never entered into force).
- 1931 Soviet-Turkish Naval Protocol. Exchange of information on prospective changes in naval inventories.
- 1935 Anglo-German Naval Agreement. German Navy limited to 35 percent of British Navy in major ship categories.
- 1936 Second London Treaty. Earlier (1922 and 1930) limits on naval forces rescinded, but retained for individual units; escalation clause to counter violations by any of the parties.
- 1936 Montreux Convention on the Turkish Straits. Recission of Lusanne demilitarization provisions; new provisions on passage of warships in times of peace and war.
- 1937 Nyon Agreement. Banned submarines from most of the Mediterranean in most circumstances; Britain and France given authority to patrol to enforce the ban.
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SOURCES: Blechman, 1974; United Nations, 1986.

Fig. 2—Naval agreements, 1919–1939

- Must give 15 days advance notice of planned transits.
- May not stay in the Black Sea for more than 21 days.

These provisions constrain nonlittoral states from maintaining a standing naval force in the Black Sea. The Convention's first life, though evidently successful, was short; the arrangement did not survive the outbreak of hostilities in 1939 and was blatantly disregarded in the war years.<sup>7</sup> Its second life, discussed later, was more durable. The Convention, unchanged, was resurrected at the end of World War II.

### THE SUBMARINE AGAIN

The German submarine had variously escaped and defied prewar efforts to control it.<sup>8</sup> In the interwar years, the submarine was several times the target of naval negotiations. The first set of measures sought to impose binding, restrictive rules on submarine warfare, with conspicuous lack of success. One of the treaties signed at the Washington Conference of 1921–1922, an American initiative, prohibited surprise submarine attacks on merchant vessels and imposed certain standards, deemed to be an "established part of international law," on the conduct of submarine operations. But the treaty, known popularly as the "Root Resolution," never entered into force. The London Treaty of 1930 reaffirmed the 1922 restrictions on the use of submarines, but with similar noneffect. The subject returned in the 1936 London Protocol, but again was never applied in practice.<sup>9</sup>

The second form of attempted control came a year later, in the Nyon Agreement of 1937. Initiated by Britain and France following the sinking of merchant ships by unidentified (but presumed to be Italian) submarines, the agreement sought to ban most

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<sup>7</sup>See, e.g., Black, 1947, pp. 174–182.

<sup>8</sup>In February 1917 alone, German U-boats sank 250 ships; in March, 330, and in April, 430, most by torpedoes fired without warning from submerged positions. By the November 1918 Armistice, the German wartime record was 373 U-boats put to sea, 178 U-boats sunk, and 5,708 allied ships sent to the bottom. Keegan, 1988, pp. 256, 259.

<sup>9</sup>The protocol, called the London Submarine Agreement, pledged Britain and Germany to sink merchant ships only in accordance with provisions of international law—that is, with warning if merchant ships were sailing unescorted, and without warning only if they were escorted or in protected convoy. Keegan, 1988, p. 261.

submarines for most purposes from the Mediterranean.<sup>10</sup> Signed by Bulgaria, Egypt, France, Great Britain, Greece, Romania, the Soviet Union, Turkey, and Yugoslavia, the agreement:

- Barred submarines from the Mediterranean, except in specified areas for naval exercises, or in transit if accompanied by a surface ship with movements announced in advance.
- Authorized Britain and France to patrol the region to enforce the ban, including the right to attack submarines found submerged in prohibited areas.

But in practice Nyon lacked a crucial element—resolve on the part of Britain and France to actually enforce it. Despite "frequent contacts" with submarines in violation, no submarine was challenged in the next two years. Like the Montreux Convention, the Nyon Agreement lapsed immediately upon the onset of hostilities in 1939.

## STRUCTURAL ARMS CONTROL

It was the third type of agreement, aimed directly at limiting naval inventories, that was the hallmark of the period. In the early 1930s, Greece and Turkey, and Turkey and the Soviet Union, signed protocols modeled on the *Pactos de Mayo* of the preceding century. In the two agreements, the parties forswore further naval buildups without giving the other advance notification. Still, it was the great experiments involving the major sea powers that captured the public imagination at the time, meant the most in terms of the peace at hand and the war to come, and that soured the taste of postwar generations for more of the same. The first was the Washington Conference and the resulting Washington Treaty of 1922.<sup>11</sup> The core of the treaty was a three-power U.S.-British-Japanese agreement to freeze their strategic naval forces for ten years at the existing ratios of 5:5:3 and to divide the Pacific into spheres of influence according to

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<sup>10</sup>International Agreement for Collective Measures Against Piratical Attacks in the Mediterranean by Submarines, September 14, 1937. The agreement, and the circumstances that led to it, are discussed in Blechman, 1974, p. 34.

<sup>11</sup>Treaty Between the United States of America, the British Empire, France, Italy, and Japan, Washington, D.C., 1922.

accompanying Four and Nine Power pacts.<sup>12</sup> All three powers canceled their large naval building programs. For the treaty's purposes, warships were divided into five categories—capital units (battleships and battle cruisers), aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers, and submarines. Two units of account were employed: displacement and main gun battery caliber. The first was the most accurate single indication of a warship's military capabilities.<sup>13</sup> The second, measured in inches, closely correlated with shell weight and the destructive power of projectiles.

The treaty imposed detailed limitations within these units of account. For capital units, for example, the maximum limits were 35,000 tons and 16-inch main batteries; in the case of aircraft carriers, the three powers could convert two capital ships under construction to large carriers of 33,000 tons with 8-inch main batteries. France and Italy were persuaded to join, such that the treaty's final naval force ratios within and across ship categories was 5:5:3:1 75:1.75. Treaty verification "was left up to the naval (and other) intelligence services" of the parties.<sup>14</sup>

The treaty also imposed limitations on naval and other military bases in a defined area of the Central Pacific. No additions were to be made to existing bases, and so no new bases were to be constructed. Though the treaty's limitations on naval inventories were global in reach, the aim was clearly to regulate the balance of naval power in the Pacific. (Germany, it should be recalled, was disarmed at the time.) As Ranger writes:

Taken together, the effect of the Washington Treaty's limits, if they were observed, would be to establish a defense dominated strategic environment in the Pacific. Japan could not attack U.S. and British possessions and allies, and those two powers could not attack Japan.<sup>15</sup>

Three follow-on treaties completed the package in the 1930s. The 1930 First London Treaty—"Treaty for the Limitation and Reduction of Naval Armament"—imposed sublimits on heavy (8-inch) and light (6-inch) cruisers, lowered allowable aircraft carrier displacement to 23,000 tons, and limited destroyers and submarines,

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<sup>12</sup>The treaty is discussed in Ranger, 1987, pp. 47–58; and in Blechman, 1974, pp. 14–17.

<sup>13</sup>For treaty purposes, displacement was measured in terms of a ship fully equipped for war, without fuel or reserve feed water, but with normal ammunition and stores. Ranger, 1987, p. 48.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

individually and in total, in several respects. The treaty aimed to extend the 1922 pact's ten-year freeze on new battleship construction, a provision that France and Italy rejected out of hand. The Second London Treaty of 1936 abolished the earlier limits on total naval forces but retained them on individual units. The 1936 agreement was initially signed by Britain, France and the United States, later joined by Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union. The third of these agreements was strictly bilateral. The Anglo-German Naval Agreement (AGNA) of 1935 set ceilings on individual German naval units and limited the German navy to 35 percent of the UK's total in each of the main classes of warships.

Though all four treaties would be severely criticized in the postwar period, AGNA was the most controversial at the time. For one thing, it was a hurried, secret arrangement. Hitler first privately proposed the deal in November 1934. He repeated the offer again in January, March, and May 1935. In rebuilding the German navy (Hitler publicly announced in March 1935 that Germany renounced Versailles and was rearming), he assured Britain that Germany recognized "the overpowering importance, and hence the justification of the British Empire to dominate the seas," that Germany was determined to "maintain a relationship with the British people and state which will prevent for all time a repetition of the only struggle there has been between the two nations," and that Germany would never dream of naval rivalry with Britain.<sup>16</sup> AGNA was signed on June 18, 1935. Though France was immediately affected (the agreement put her ships within range of German naval gunners), Paris was neither consulted nor was it told subsequently how many ships, of what size, and in which categories the agreement actually permitted Germany to build. But Britain, it turned out, was not sure on these counts either. A key clause was mistranslated. As Manchester writes:

Actually, the pact permitted the Nazis to construct five battleships whose armament and tonnage outclassed any vessels in the Royal Navy—this had been accomplished by a mistranslation of one clause—together with twenty-one cruisers, sixty-four destroyers, and, in practice, an unlimited number of submarines.<sup>17</sup>

The last point was particularly critical. The agreement was fatally porous regarding submarines. At German insistence, they were to be an exception to the 35 percent ratio. Germany pledged to limit itself to four submarines for every five British submarines, except in cases of *notwendigkeit* ("necessity"). Britain's Prime Minister,

<sup>16</sup>Manchester, 1988, pp. 144–145.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

Stanley Baldwin, "accepted on the spot, then called in a small group of ministers and laid it all before them."<sup>18</sup>

Winston Churchill, out of power and without portfolio at the time, railed at both the fact and the terms of AGNA. Germany, he complained, had been rebuilding its navy in violation of the Versailles limits for at least two years before Hitler publicly denounced Versailles and acknowledged rearmament.<sup>19</sup> The Admiralty knew this. How it could acquiesce in the 1935 agreement (which it clearly did) astonished Churchill. How could it be, he demanded,

in the face of this brazen and fraudulent violation of the Peace Treaty, carefully planned and begun at least two years earlier, [that] the Admiralty actually thought it was worthwhile making an Anglo-German naval agreement[?]<sup>20</sup>

It was not only German perfidy that made the agreement parlous. It was also, in Churchill's view, a strategical myopia on the part of the British government. In Manchester's account:

[T]he most perilous feature of the pact, said Churchill, was that it took no account of Britain's worldwide responsibilities. Germany, he reminded Parliament, had no overseas possessions. Britain had an empire. . . . The 100-to-35 ratio was comforting only if the Royal Navy were confined to the North Sea.

He paused, scowled, and then lashed out: "What a windfall this has been for Japan! Observe what the consequences are. . . . The British fleet, when this [German] programme is completed, will be largely anchored in the North Sea." Now "the whole advantage of having a great naval base at Singapore upon which a battle fleet can be based . . . is greatly affected by the fact that when this German fleet is built we shall not be able to keep any appreciable portion of the British Fleet so far from home."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>19</sup>German rearmament, in violation of Versailles, in fact predated Hitler. The 1919 Versailles Treaty set up a Control Commission to supervise German demilitarization, including the right to intrusive on-site inspection, but it soon fell into disuse and was disbanded in 1926.

<sup>20</sup>Churchill, 1948, p. 108.

<sup>21</sup>Manchester, 1988, p. 146.

## PEACE AND PACIFISM

London in the 1930s was not noticeably receptive to Churchill's hectoring on points of global strategy. The successive Conservative governments of Baldwin and Chamberlain were embarked on a seemingly inexhaustible policy of appeasement toward Germany. In this, London was not alone. France was similarly oriented, as was much of what was left of the League of Nations. The temperament could be glimpsed in an open letter from one internationally prominent native-born German to the other. In 1932, under League of Nations auspices, Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein engaged in an open debate on the topic "why war?" (*Warum Krieg?*) In Freud's prescription: "If willingness to engage in war is an effect of the destructive instinct, the most obvious plan will be to bring Eros, its antagonist, into play against it. . . . Anything that encourages the growth of emotional ties between men must operate against war."<sup>22</sup>

"Never since Jefferson's time," Samuel Eliot Morison later wrote, "had America, and never in recorded history had England, been in so pacifist a mood as in 1933-39."<sup>23</sup> For Churchill, the 1930s were a time of "the long dismal, drawling tides of drift and surrender, of wrong measurements and feeble impulses."<sup>24</sup> When, in June 1940, the U.S. Congress appropriated an additional \$4 billion to begin building a "two-ocean" navy, Admiral Harold R. Stark, Chief of Naval Operations, remarked, "Dollars cannot buy yesterday."<sup>25</sup>

Still, there was more to the decade than "wrong measurements and feeble impulses." Japan and Germany built up to and then beyond the naval treaties' limitations. Britain and the United States never fully built to the maximum treaty allowances. But Britain and the United States did build naval forces in the 1930s, and the United States at least did not sit still in the face of the Japanese treaty break-out.

## COMPLIANCE AND DISREGARD

In 1934, the Japanese government announced that it would reject any follow-on naval treaties when the 1922 (Washington) and 1930 (First London) treaties expired in 1936. At the time, the Japanese had built their naval forces to treaty limits in terms of

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<sup>22</sup>Quoted in Carter, 1977, p. 39.

<sup>23</sup>Morison, 1965, p. 343.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 351.

numbers of individual units. Japan was considerably less faithful, however, in complying with treaty limits *on* individual units, many of which exceeded displacement tonnage limits by 10 to 20 percent.

Though Japanese and later German circumvention of naval treaty terms were far and away the most critical and consequential breaches in the interwar period, the earliest disputes about treaty compliance were in fact between Britain and the United States and focused on the Washington Treaty's "reconstruction" clause. In limiting the major parties' modernization of existing ships, the clause stated that "no alterations in side armor, in caliber, number or general type of main armaments shall be permitted."<sup>26</sup> The U.S. Navy, "outraged by their British counterparts," nevertheless proposed, under a "broad interpretation," to increase the elevation, and thus the range, of its battleships' main batteries to 30 degrees.<sup>27</sup> Britain responded in 1924 with a formal protest; the U.S. move, in its view, was a violation of the spirit, if not the letter, of the "reconstruction" clause. (On the same grounds, Britain also formally protested a U.S. decision to substitute oil for coal in six older battleships.) The United States was unpersuaded. The U.S. Navy argued, even before the protest, that the reconstruction clause permitted increased main battery elevation.<sup>28</sup> Though Britain never formally withdrew its protest, it also did not pursue the matter and beginning in 1935 followed suit by elevating the main batteries on four of its battleships. So did Japan, but much more spectacularly. By the early 1930s, it had increased this elevation to 43 degrees (versus 30 degrees on U.S. and British ships) on all ten of its capital units.<sup>29</sup>

The United States did not build to treaty limits in numbers of individual units. Though it, too, overran displacement limits in a couple of cases,<sup>30</sup> in several instances it

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<sup>26</sup>The clause, and the ensuing dispute, are discussed in Roskill, 1968, pp. 335 et seq.

<sup>27</sup>Ranger, 1987, p. 49.

<sup>28</sup>As Ranger writes, "the United States did not want the treaty to freeze its inferiority in place, and the United States could afford modernization." Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Roskill, 1968, p. 335.

<sup>30</sup>The two large U.S. carriers converted from incomplete battlecruisers were limited by the treaty to 30,000 tons-displacement. When it became clear that they would actually displace 36,000 tons, the U.S. relied again on its broad interpretation of treaty terms. Its position was that "as the ships were more than half finished as capital ships at the time of the conference, the [another] clause about extra protection applied to them." Roskill, 1968, pp. 335-335; Ranger, 1987, p. 50.

built below the limits by as much as 10 percent. The result, in Ranger's account, was that

Japan's early Washington treaty cruisers initially displaced 11,000 tons (in violation of treaty limits) while the early U.S. treaty cruisers displaced about 9,000 tons. Japan's treaty violations were such that its cruisers displaced some 22 percent more than U.S. cruisers, a militarily significant advantage.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, though not known at the time, Japan was embarked on building the largest battleships in history, the 64,000 ton, 18-inch main battery *Yamato* class.

Although Germany was not a party to the earlier treaties, AGNA extended the 1922 and 1930 treaties' limits to individual German units, and Germany did sign the Second London Treaty of 1936. All the while, the German navy was on the build. In 1934, Hitler secretly ordered construction of the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisnau*, battlecruisers of 26,000 tons, 16,000 more than the limit imposed on Germany by Versailles. In 1936, Germany laid down the 32,000-ton battleship *Bismark*, assuring Britain at the time that the ship met the terms of AGNA and, indeed, providing the British technical data claiming to prove that the *Bismark* was within treaty limits. Germany also had under development a new class, or category, of warship that it called armored ships (*panzerschiffe*), but others quickly dubbed "pocket battleships." The last two of these, the *Graf Spee* and the *Deutschland*, were a special breed that also tested British credulity. "Masterpieces of miniaturization," the two "pocket battleships" were actually battlecruisers displacing 26,000 tons instead of the 10,000 tons allowed by AGNA. Each carried six 11-inch guns, had a 28-knot top speed, and a range of 21,500 miles—"mightier than almost any warship fast enough to overtake them."<sup>32</sup>

By 1939, Germany had built three battleships, eight heavy cruisers, an aircraft carrier, 34 destroyers and torpedo boats, and a new class of submarines. The 10,000-ton pocket battleships actually displaced 12,000 tons; the 26,000-ton *Graf Spee* and *Deutschland* displaced 32,000 tons; and the 35,000-ton *Bismark* and its sister ship *Tirpitz* displaced 42,000 tons.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>32</sup>Manchester, 1988, p. 558.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 556–557; Ranger, 1987, p. 54.

## REACTION AND ADJUSTMENT

Though resolute military preparedness was scarcely the watchword among the Western democracies, it could not be said that Britain and the United States were idle in naval matters during this period. On the contrary, in the 1930s, Britain built five new battleships, six aircraft carriers, and 19 heavy cruisers. However, Britain deliberately built below its capabilities. The new battleships were designed not to exceed the new treaty limits of 1936 (which Britain still thought the Japanese would accept). This meant that the five King George V battleships had a 35,000-ton displacement and 14-inch main batteries. Other things also slipped. Maintenance was one. In Manchester's account, "It seemed inconceivable that equipment vital to the navy should have been permitted to rust away, but that had happened. . . . They just let small matters slide."<sup>34</sup>

The U.S. Navy was also expanded. Although the U.S. Army got no fresh injections in the parsimonious budgetary climate of the 1930s (on the eve of war in Europe in 1939, it totaled under 190,000 men and ranked 17th in size in the world), the Navy had a respectable building program. Between 1934 and 1939, the United States commissioned 16 cruisers, 53 destroyers, 20 submarines, two aircraft carriers, two minesweepers, four fleet tugs, two cargo ships, two gunboats, and a drydock.<sup>35</sup>

While the British government of the 1930s took the Japanese and German naval developments in (uncharacteristically for the historical Britain), almost diffident stride, the United States proved to be a different matter. Almost to a man (Carl Vinson, chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee, was the prominent exception) the Congress wanted no part of Europe's growing mess and, in the main, lost little sleep over Japan's invasion of China and its ambitious assertion of a predestined role in the affairs of the Central and Western Pacific. The Roosevelt administration saw the world differently. It viewed with special alarm Japan's breach of the nonfortification limits of the Washington Treaty.<sup>36</sup> To deal with Japan's suspected treaty violations and its impending break-out from all treaty limitations, the administration moved toward a two-

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<sup>34</sup>Manchester, 1988, p. 562.

<sup>35</sup>Quinlan, 1963, p. 155.

<sup>36</sup>Owing to ambiguities in the treaty's language, it is not entirely clear that Japan technically violated the treaty's proscriptions on fortifications and bases in the "Mandated Territories" of the Pacific, but this is what the Roosevelt administration focused on nevertheless. The United States seems to have missed Japan's more significant violations of treaty ship-tonnage-displacement limits at the time. See Ranger, 1987, pp. 51-52.

pronged strategy of response. The first was to bring the U.S. Navy up to strength. With Vinson as critical collaborator, Roosevelt secured legislation (the First and Second Vinson Acts of 1934 and 1938) authorizing the buildup of the U.S. Navy to its maximum permitted treaty strength in terms of total forces, and then beyond these limits after they expired in 1936.<sup>37</sup> This encountered predictable difficulties in the Congress—Roosevelt and Vinson argued that it could not be objectionable to build a "treaty navy"—funds came slower than the enabling legislation; but funds did come and contributed to the growth noted above.

The second prong involved protection of U.S. interests through the crafting of treaty escalator clauses inserted by the United States in the 1936 London Treaty (in the face of, and as a way around, stiff British opposition to any direct weakening of treaty terms). Unless Japan agreed to the terms of the 1936 treaty, two such escalator provisions would come into effect. The first was automatic. Unless Japan accepted the treaty by April 1, 1937, the treaty's proposed reduction in the maximum permitted main battery caliber, from 16 inches to 14 inches, would not take place. (The U.S. Navy had designed its first treaty battleships with both 14- and 16-inch main batteries; the 16-inch main batteries were ordered at the close of the April 1 deadline).<sup>38</sup> The second clause allowed the United States, Britain, and France to increase the maximum displacement of their battleships to 45,000 tons if any other nation built beyond the 35,000-ton limit. Invoked by the United States in 1938, the result was the building of four U.S. *Iowa*-class battleships of 45,000 tons.

## SHORT OF WAR

In January 1938, Roosevelt proposed to the British government a conference of leading powers in Washington to discuss the growing turmoil in Europe. Chamberlain brushed the proposal aside. "He preferred the appeasement approach to Hitler, and felt that Japan's doings in China did not concern Britain."<sup>39</sup> In March 1939, the British and French governments reversed policy toward Germany. In September, the first part of the

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<sup>37</sup>The legislation is discussed in Ranger, 1987, p. 52.

<sup>38</sup>This was not a small or insignificant matter. Ranger usefully points out what it meant in military terms. "Because main batteries took longer to build than the ships carrying them, the [U.S.] navy's ability to begin design of its 16-inch batteries in 1935 enabled its battleships to be completed in time for the Pacific war." Ranger, 1987, p. 53.

<sup>39</sup>Morison, 1965, p. 347.

Second World War was formally inaugurated but with little interaction between Britain and France on the one hand, and Germany on the other, save at sea.

The "phony war" in Europe ran from September 1939 to April 1940. By then, the Roosevelt administration was committed to a "short of war" policy aimed at keeping Britain fighting, gaining time for U.S. rearmament, and restraining Japan through a combination of diplomacy and naval "deterrence." On June 14, 1940, the day Hitler took Paris, Roosevelt signed a naval expansion bill to begin building a "two-ocean navy," among other things to end reliance on moving the fleet from one ocean to the other through the Panama Canal. At the time, the U.S. Navy had 1.2 million tons of combatant shipping. The bill authorized "1,325,000 tons of new construction in battleships, battle cruisers, carriers, cruisers, destroyers, and submarines."<sup>40</sup> Following transfers of ships between the two fleets in the spring of 1941, the Pacific Fleet was stabilized with about two-thirds as many ships as the Atlantic Fleet had at the time. The strategical U.S. priority was on the Atlantic. With the new construction, the Atlantic Fleet continued to grow. As a result, "by a combination of luck and foresight, Roosevelt saw to it that the cream of the American Navy was quite out of reach of Japanese threats."<sup>41</sup>

## WAR AT SEA

In the First World War, the Kaiser, having invested heavily in a High Seas Fleet, opted not to risk losing it in a direct clash with the Royal Navy. Hitler had no such misgivings, but the German navy did. On the first day of the war, German Admiral Erich Raeder wrote that Germany's *Kriegsmarine* was "in no way" prepared "for the great struggle with Great Britain." He thought his surface fleet "so inferior in number and strength to those of the British fleet" that they "can do no more than show that they know how to die gallantly" and his submarines "still much too weak to have decisive effect on the war."<sup>42</sup>

In the event, Germany's surface forces fell to the far shy side of decisive effect. The battleships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* ventured out of the Baltic and destroyed the British merchant cruiser *Rawalpindi*, but then returned quickly to the Baltic bastion, soon

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<sup>40</sup>Morison, 1955, p. 27.

<sup>41</sup>Quinlan, 1963, p. 191.

<sup>42</sup>Manchester, 1988, p. 557.

to be "the sole resources of Germany" in the battleship class.<sup>43</sup> Of the three pocket battleships, *Deutschland* was a major disappointment and was recalled after sinking only two merchantmen. *Graf Spee* sent nine British cargo ships to the bottom but was put out of action for good by the British fleet in the South Atlantic on the 100th day of the war. After nine months of sea trials and crew training, the *Bismark* left Gdynia, Poland on May 19, 1941 with orders to disrupt British shipping. On May 24 she sank *HMS Hood* with a loss of 1,416 lives. On May 27, *Bismark* was sunk in turn by the British fleet.

As in the First World War, Germany was effectively reduced to submarine warfare. Ten days after AGNA was signed, Berlin launched the U-1 submarine. The new boat had two powerful features: It was equipped with heavy-duty batteries, which meant it could stay submerged for a longer period of time; and it had electrically powered torpedos, which left no telltale wakes. At first, Hitler prohibited attacks without warning on enemy passenger and merchant ships. On October 14, 1939, however, a German submarine managed to sink the British battleship *Royal Oak* at the British naval base of Scapa Flow. Two days later, Germany announced that "all merchant ships definitely recognized as enemy can be torpedoed without warning." Neutral ships, other than U.S. ships, could be similarly attacked if their destinations were British ports. Admiral Dönitz, German submarine fleet commander, asked for a force of 300 boats. Hitler, however, equivocated. Like Wilhelm, he liked powerful surface ships (still under Mahan's influence, the German navy also preferred to envision decisive battles between maximum effective size. Still, in the first month of the war alone, German submarines sunk 26 allied ships. The U-boat menace plagued the Atlantic until mid-1943.<sup>44</sup>

Japan's naval spectacular in the Pacific was short-lived.<sup>45</sup> With U.S. victories at Coral Sea and Midway in 1942, the Japanese naval threat in the Pacific was blunted. At Guadalcanal in August, the military initiative passed to the United States. Though the war at sea in the Pacific lasted the duration, in a strictly navy-on-navy sense it was a

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 571.

<sup>44</sup>By December 1941, Germany had built 236 U-boats and was enjoying an exchange ratio of about 13 merchant ships sunk for every U-boat lost (in the South Atlantic, the ratio was 81:1). By January 1943, allied escort programs and antisubmarine warfare (ASW) had improved dramatically. By March 1943, the exchange ratio had fallen to 1:1. In May alone, 41 U-boats were lost. See, generally, Keegan, 1988, Ch. 4.

<sup>45</sup>At the start of the war, Japan deployed ten carriers, more than any competitor, and had the single largest embarked naval air force—about 500 aircraft.

on the affair by mid-1943. In fact, many in Congress wondered loudly about the continuing ship-building in the later years. "I hope you gentlemen will not take numbers as measuring the relative strength of navies," Fleet Admiral King protested in testimony in 1945.

It is thought by a great many, and I read in the newspapers, that after the Battle of Leyte Gulf the Navy had nothing left to do. Well, that was only one of the things that the Navy had to do during the war, and I think perhaps the Navy's losses at Okinawa emphasize more clearly than any other thing the variety of tasks that the Navy has done and should be ready to do. It is not ship against ship alone.<sup>46</sup>

## STRATEGY AND CIRCUMSTANCE

Though neither enemy navy proved to be nearly as effective (once confronted) as a quick reading of the pattern, character, and extent of treaty break-out in the 1930s might imply, subduing the two naval forces was costly nevertheless. Had the naval agreements of the interwar period mattered? The Montreux (1936) and Nyon (1937) agreements promptly collapsed. This should not have surprised anyone (at the time, it did not). But it left large questions. Montreux and Nyon regulated naval activities in certain bodies of water. On almost all measures that count, they had no effect whatsoever on the naval inventories (and therefore the true naval capabilities) of any of the parties. What can be kept away in peacetime (Nyon, of course, proved to be useless even on this count) can be reintroduced in regulated areas at the first sign of conflict.

The structural agreements—that is, Washington, the two London treaties, and AGNA—present a more complicated case. In retrospect, the United States may have been better positioned in the early 1940s without the Washington and London treaties, not so much because treaty terms themselves were disadvantageous but because they had what Morison and many others believed after the war to be a calamitous "lulling effect" on U.S. policy.

[F]or the United States, the most important effect of the treaty [1922] was an imbalance between the U.S. and Japanese navies. . . . [I]n 1922 the treaty left the United States in a commanding position. . . . All that the United States had to do was to build up its carrier and cruiser forces to match [its battlefleet]. What happened was that the public and

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<sup>46</sup>U.S. Congress, House, *Composition of the Postwar Navy*, Hearings, Committee on Naval Affairs, in *Sundry Legislation Affecting the Naval Establishment 1945*, 79th Cong., 1st sess., 1945, p. 1196.

Congress saw the treaty itself as proof that the underlying tensions in the Pacific had been eliminated, and naval construction was seriously constricted.<sup>47</sup>

This seems plausible. But is it? While it is always risky to pose after-the-fact "what if?" questions, it is not easy to imagine or conclude that events would have been demonstrably better for the United States in the absence of the interwar agreements. That the United States would have spent more on its navy in the 1920s than it did is rather doubtful. As Russell Weigley writes, America in the 1920s was dedicated "not only to the dream that wars had ended forever, but even more strongly to the more prosaic fetish of economy in government."<sup>48</sup> Though Japanese expansionist ambitions in the Western Pacific were unmistakable long before the Washington conference, Japan at the time of the conference was still headed by a Liberal government; Germany's military machine was being dismantled.<sup>49</sup>

The crucial period was the 1930s, and here there are two stories to recount. Britain steadfastly ignored its own intelligence about German rearmament and chose consistently to put the brightest interpretation on political events in Central Europe. The United States (that is, the Roosevelt administration) responded to evident Japanese treaty violations with a consistent resolve. In this, one could venture, the treaties actually helped. Roosevelt and Vinson could make the case in the 1930s that the United States was only building a permitted "treaty navy." Without treaty limitations, there would have been no "violations" by Japan, and later Germany, to point to. Without the treaty limitations, there was no benchmark against to which to measure other nations' naval expansions or to internalize these events as having meaning for (and requiring response from) the Western democracies.

In retrospect, nonetheless, even had the parties more faithfully complied with the letter and spirit of the agreements, the democracies had gambled strategically in several respects. First, so long as Germany was not a military factor (it was certainly not thought to be in the 1920s) the 5:5:3 arrangement in the Pacific was not unreasonable from a U.S. or British strategical perspective. Once a rebuilt German navy entered the picture, however, the strategic balance was skewed. In entering into "global" limitations on naval

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<sup>47</sup>Friedman, 1985, p. 183.

<sup>48</sup>Weigley, 1967, p. 400.

<sup>49</sup>Indeed, a key argument of the Japanese militarists in coming to power was that Japan's short end of the 5:5:3 ratio in the 1922 treaty was insulting and unconstitutional.

inventories, the two naval powers with global commitments and responsibilities (Britain and the United States) were then at strategic disadvantage with regard to the two "regional" naval powers (Japan and Germany). Japan could concentrate its naval power in the Western Pacific and Germany, in the northern Atlantic. The United States had two oceans to defend, and Britain had three. The effect was to "permit" Japan to become the strongest naval power in the Western Pacific and Germany to tie down much of the British force that might otherwise have contributed to the Pacific balance.<sup>50</sup>

Second, the Washington Treaty's Pacific basing limitations (a Japanese proposal) were not strategically beneficial to the United States and Britain. The United States renounced strengthening its bases (Guam and Manila) that lay west of Pearl Harbor. Britain similarly denied the same to itself east of Singapore and north of Australia. Though Japan was also restricted, the Western Pacific was its backyard. It is not clear that this mattered greatly in fact. Neither Britain nor the United States had any particular plans in the 1920s and 1930s to strengthen or expand Pacific area bases, and there is only one recorded instance where it can be said that the treaty got seriously in the way of defense measures that the U.S. Navy wanted.<sup>51</sup>

Third, AGNA legitimized Germany's naval (and general) rearmament program. It tore up the "permanent" arms limitations of Versailles and gave tacit, if not also formal, sanction to a German military and navy on the build. In Manchester's words:

[W]ith a stroke of the pen England—which had nothing to gain from the naval pact—was shattering what remained of Versailles's claims to legitimacy. Germany, as she continued to rearm, could no longer be accused of breaking her word.<sup>52</sup>

Yet, it was nevertheless the case, as Anthony Eden told the French ambassador at the time, that the limitations at Versailles "no longer meant much."<sup>53</sup> Had Britain rebuffed Hitler's AGNA proposal, would Germany have abandoned its naval rearmament? That is doubtful.

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<sup>50</sup>This, of course, was one of Churchill's chief objections.

<sup>51</sup>In the late 1930s, the U.S. Navy wanted to lay defensive minefields to protect the Philippines, a proposal blocked by the U.S. Judge Advocate, who ruled that the move would violate the "nonfortification" terms of the 1922 treaty. Hoover, 1980, p. 117, note 26; cited in Ranger, 1987, p. 51.

<sup>52</sup>Manchester, 1988, p. 145.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

The agreements generally stumbled, as in the past, over submarines and submarine warfare (Mahan's theories of great naval engagements at sea never quite took adequate account of this dimension of naval warfare). They also were generally blind to one of the more significant naval developments of the time—naval airpower. But then, so was much of the naval thinking at the time. The battleship and heavy cruiser were *the* capital units upon which navies judged their own and their adversary's military capabilities; it was natural to concentrate arms limitations so heavily around these.

Though detailed, the structural agreements of the interwar period were not without important ambiguities, which led to friction between the United States and Britain in the 1920s, to vagueness about Japan's "true" violations in the 1930s, and to naval adjustments (like the later pocket battleships) that might technically comply but in fact circumvented. One might equally venture that they were too detailed to practically manage.

Important violations (like the Japanese *Yamato*-class battleship) went undetected, suggesting that the nonintrusive verification arrangements of the treaties were inadequate. Most that was, or should have been, of concern to Britain and the United States was known, however. In the case of Britain, the failure lay chiefly in the absence of response.

#### IV. A DIFFERENT WAR, A DIFFERENT WORLD, A DIFFERENT NAVY

To maintain a five-ocean navy to fight a no-ocean opponent . . . is a foolish waste of time, men and resources.

—Major General H. J. Knerr, USAF, 1947<sup>1</sup>

The Second World War and the events it set in motion made much of the earlier legacy, if not obsolete, then at least not immediately applicable. The world was a different place after the war, with a very different naval concept and balance. The U.S. Navy itself was different.

#### THE POSTWAR "NAVAL" CONSTRUCT

Although slowly recognized at first, traditional conceptions of "navies" and "naval operations" no longer fit. Before the war, the principal purpose of a navy was to defeat another navy. Blockades and off-shore bombardments were accepted as legitimate extensions of naval power, but they were still side events. In a tradition unchanged over centuries, navies fought navies in "naval" engagements at sea.<sup>2</sup> However, the revolution in weaponry and its uses during the war made it much less possible to continue to think of warfare in terms of air, land, and sea, or to conceive of entire missions and military functions as within the exclusive purview of one or another military service. Wartime uses of airpower had irrevocably shattered the traditional boundary—the coastline—that

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<sup>1</sup>Knerr, 1947, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>This was the legacy of Mahan. Testifying before the Congress in 1944, Josephus Daniels, Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of the Navy, recounted the U.S. Navy's thinking in these regards:

They had a War College at Newport, R.I., where [for 50 years] studies were directed on the theory that the fate of war would depend on a great naval battle in which the ships of this and an enemy country would be engaged. It was accepted that the country whose armada lost would accept the defeat as decisive and sue for peace.

U.S. Congress, House, *Proposal to Establish a Single Department of the Armed Services*, Hearings, Select Committee on Postwar Military Policy, 78th Cong., 2d sess., 1944, p. 249.

separated land and naval warfare. Land-based aircraft contributed to control of the sea and sea-launched planes to the course and conduct of ground warfare. The big capital ship was engaged as often in offshore bombardments and air attacks in support of ground operations as it was in traditional "naval" encounters.

The result was that there was more (but in some respects less) to the U.S. Navy after 1945 than before. In the face of dramatic advances in the range of aircraft during and after the war, a fleet at sea was more vulnerable to air (and later missile) attacks launched from land. But this cut both ways. Aircraft and missiles launched from platforms at sea could now attack a much broader and deeper range of land targets than the 25-mile range of previous battleship batteries. The U.S. Navy, often begrudgingly, became increasingly linked in the postwar period to attacks against land targets—not only against traditional targets such as shipyards, submarine pens, and naval airfields, but also against all types of land targets within the range of Navy guns, missiles, and aircraft. The launching of the Polaris fleet ballistic missile submarine in the early 1960s gave the U.S. Navy a platform that had only that purpose and those targets.<sup>3</sup>

Pearl Harbor did not diminish the Navy's traditional fondness for large capital ships, but it did shift it. In place of the battleship and large battle cruiser, the Navy emerged from the war with a great enthusiasm for the aircraft carrier.<sup>4</sup> Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King reported after the war:

With the possible exception of amphibious warfare, which covers a field of considerably broad scope, the outstanding development of the war in the field of naval strategy and tactics has been the convincing proof and general acceptance of the fact that . . . naval aviation is and must always be an integral and primary component of the fleet. . . . Because of its mobility and the striking power and long range of its weapons, the aircraft carrier has proved itself a major and vital element of naval strength, whose only weakness—its vulnerability—demands the support of all other types, and thereby places an additional premium on the flexibility and balance of our fleet.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The postwar Navy history is recounted in Lacy, 1983.

<sup>4</sup>Though not at first. "When the war began our carrier strength could not stand much attrition," Fleet Admiral King said later. But even after the Japanese delivered a stunning lesson in the importance of carrier aviation at Pearl Harbor, the initial reaction was to build, not carriers, but battleships. "Shortly after we suffered the heavy loss in battleship strength at Pearl Harbor," King reported, "our battleships under construction were given top priority." King, 1946, pp. 14, 15.

<sup>5</sup>King, "Third Official Report to the Secretary of the Navy," 1946, quoted in Lacy, 1983, pp. 65–66.

Nuclear ordnance was very soon an integral part of the Navy's weapon mix. Immediately following the war, the Navy was vocally and vigorously opposed to atomic weapons as, variously, immoral, militarily irrelevant, and marginally effective.<sup>6</sup> But the handwriting was on the wall. By late 1948, the Navy had demonstrated to its own satisfaction two propositions: that surface fleets were not obsolete in the atomic age, and that they could perform useful atomic functions. The first proposition was "demonstrated" in the famous, and famously inconclusive, Bikini atoll test in the summer of 1946.<sup>7</sup> The second proposition began in a Navy project called "Operation Daisy-Chain," which showed that refitted carriers could accommodate larger, also refitted, aircraft to carry the smaller atomic weapons then being developed. The Eisenhower administration—committed to "keeping our boys at our side," avoiding grinding land wars of attrition (like Korea), sure that military efficiency and national economy required greater emphases on firepower than on military manpower—viewed nuclear ordnance as the best answer to any number of questions. Like the other military services, the Navy "went nuclear" in the early 1950s. With its own role in the nuclear age assured by mid-decade, the "New Look" Navy of the Eisenhower years embraced nuclear weapon systems, both very tactical and longer-range, wherever they could be fitted on naval platforms.<sup>8</sup>

So far as traditional strategic naval thinking was concerned, World War II was uncomfortably and perplexingly decisive. The war left the United States with no significant naval enemies and no seriously challenging foreign naval forces. The Japanese, German, and Italian fleets were no more; France had a vastly diminished naval capability; under fiscal pressures at home, the British Royal Navy was gradually reduced to a pale shadow of its former self. This was pretty much it for the competition. "The future of Russia as a naval power cannot be foreseen," the Navy reported in its first demobilization plan in 1943, "but it is reasonable to assume that this arm of her military

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<sup>6</sup>See, e.g., Leahy, 1950, pp. 439–441; and Admiral Marc A. Mitscher's views in Taylor, 1959, pp. 304–305.

<sup>7</sup>At Bikini, a fleet of captured Japanese and German vessels, plus decommissioned U.S. ships, was subjected to atomic blast—one an air drop by the Air Force, the second an underwater explosion. The first bomb missed its target by more than two miles, and destroyed more of the data-gathering instrumentation for the experiment than of the target fleet. The second explosion was more successful. Some ships sank (to the dismay of the Navy) but not enough, fast enough (to the dismay of the Air Force). Lacy, 1983, pp. 104–106.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 74–76, 110–116, 203–212.

forces will be considerably increased." But the Navy at the time did not put much stock in the assumption. In fact, in its early postwar planning, the closest the Navy could come to identifying a possible postwar naval challenger was to ponder future relations with the one country that would still have some naval capability after the war. "Great Britain will be a strong commercial rival with the attendant possibility of future differences."<sup>9</sup>

The steady postwar decline of prewar colonial systems, coupled with the emergence of new nations in Africa and southern Asia, presented a power vacuum and a source of contention that drew the U.S. Navy increasingly toward concerns about lesser powers, few of which had any naval capability to speak of. Beginning in the late 1960s, the Soviet Union would emerge as a genuine naval threat, but the postwar business of the U.S. Navy was mainly to contend with the nonnavies of the world.

### **LIMITING NAVAL FORCES**

Against this backdrop, a return to the kinds of naval arms control of the prewar period made almost no sense, even if the postwar generation in the West had thought more favorably of the prewar experience than it did in fact. The stuff the postwar U.S. Navy was made of was strikingly different, as were the Navy's conceptions of itself and the nation's conception of its Navy. Besides, in the absence of serious competition, there was no one to negotiate with.

Still, the war did not erase the legacy entirely. Though regularly disregarded during the war, and technically expired in 1956, the 1936 Montreux Convention survived reasonably intact to continue as the agreed regulator of naval movements in the Black Sea. In the immediate postwar years the Soviet Union made several efforts to amend the treaty, but without success; and it seemed to lose interest in the matter after 1953. Blechman's assessment in 1974 still largely applies.

[T]he signatories continue to modify their behavior so as to adhere to the letter, if not fully the spirit, of the agreement. . . . Apparently, . . . its provisions are sufficiently flexible for the signatories still to find it in their interest to comply, at least to a minimal extent, with its requirements.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 48-49. The immediate postwar Navy, it should be noted, was not alone in having difficulties identifying a future enemy, though its historical view that enemies necessarily came by sea did skew it in an idiosyncratic direction. The first postwar military policy of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, approved on September 30, 1945, spoke of no particular postwar challenge from the Soviet Union. Ibid., pp. 48-50.

<sup>10</sup>Blechman, 1974, p. 35.

On February 12, 1988, two U.S. warships—the cruiser *USS Yorktown* and the destroyer *USS Caron*—were deliberately bumped by two Soviet frigates in Soviet territorial waters within the Black Sea. In its protest, the United States declared that its ships were in the waters pursuant to the provisions of the Montreux Convention of 1936. In fact, the U.S. Navy had conducted similar Black Sea patrols two or three times a year for over 30 years to visibly reaffirm its Montreux rights to innocent passage in these waters. In the U.S. view, the treaty remains very much relevant.

## V. THE POSTWAR RECORD

We have never considered, and do not now consider, that it is an ideal situation when the navies of the great powers are cruising about for long periods far from their own shores, and we are prepared to solve this problem, but to solve it, as they say, on an equal basis. On the basis of such principles, the Soviet Union is ready to discuss any proposals.

—Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, 1971<sup>1</sup>

Soviet concerns about U.S. naval activities can be traced almost to the day in 1946 when President Truman dispatched the unaccompanied battleship *Missouri* to the Mediterranean as a signal of U.S. interest in Soviet intrigues in Greece and Turkey. That step was followed six months later by a U.S. announcement of the stationing of a "permanent" U.S. naval presence in the Mediterranean and the formal designation of this presence as the "United States Sixth Fleet" on June 1, 1948. Proposals for naval disengagement in various ocean areas were a recurring feature of Soviet diplomacy in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1957, the Soviets proposed to the United States a formal negotiation for naval disengagement in the Mediterranean. In 1958, Nikolai Bulganin made the first in a long series of proposals to establish a nuclear-weapon free zone in northern Europe, including Nordic and Arctic waters. Later proposals dealt with disengagement from the Indian Ocean, parts of the Pacific, and also the Baltic Sea. Brezhnev's general proposition, quoted above, invited the United States to join in a comprehensive mutual limitation on naval deployments throughout the globe, a proposal that was discussed but never acted upon by the United States.

Though typically resistant to Soviet naval overtures, the United States was not without initiatives of its own. In 1962, at the "Eighteen Nation Disarmament Conference" in Geneva, one of the U.S. proposals was that there be advance notification of "significant movements of naval surface forces of substantial size" and also observers posted at principal ports.<sup>2</sup> Nothing came of this. The next time out, beginning in 1967, the United States met with more success.

<sup>1</sup>*Pravda*, June 12, 1971; in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, July 13, 1971.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *Documents on Disarmament* Washington, D.C., 1963, p. 1218.

## INCIDENTS AT SEA

The bilateral U.S.-Soviet INCSEA Agreement of 1972 was a U.S. initiative of 1967, which the Soviets ignored for over two years before signaling any interest. Actual negotiations began in the spring of 1971. The agreement was signed in Moscow one year later.<sup>3</sup> INCSEA was intended to establish "rules of the road" governing the peacetime behavior of the two navies when in close proximity to each other. The agreement, still very much in force, does this through four basic provisions:

- Regulation of dangerous maneuvers (article II specifically requires ships to remain well clear of each other and to show particular care when approaching ships engaged in launching or landing aircraft or in underway replenishment).
- Restriction of harassment (articles II and III prohibit simulated attacks, "various aerobatics" over and near ships, dropping objects, flashing searchlights on ships' bridges, etc.).
- Increased communication at sea (article III requires use of internationally recognized signals; other articles require advance notice of maneuvers and other actions that may present a danger to navigation or to aircraft).
- Regular consultations and information exchanges (including bilateral reviews of incidents that have occurred, an annual review of the agreement itself, and provisions for renewal of the agreement in three-year increments).

Two matters the Soviets wanted are not incorporated. First, the Soviet Union sought, and the United States opposed, a specific distance formula that would, for example, prohibit maneuvers within a certain distance of the other side's warships. U.S. opposition proceeded chiefly from practical considerations. Verification and enforcement of any such distance formula would not be easy; in difficult waters the restriction could be more dangerous than its absence; Soviet warships mischievously intruding into the middle of U.S. naval maneuvers could provoke technical violations. The Soviets dropped their insistence for such provisions in exchange for a U.S. agreement to discuss the matter in the future. Second, the Soviets wanted to impose

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<sup>3</sup>Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Prevention of Incidents on and Over the High Seas, May 25, 1972. The agreement is discussed at length in Lynn-Jones, in George, Farley, and Dallin, 1988, pp. 482-509.

limitations on submarine activities in the INCSEA context. This was impractical in the U.S. view and also unacceptable on broader security grounds. The United States was reluctant even to discuss submarine incidents out of concern that any negotiated provision might force the disclosure of U.S. submarine locations and patrol areas. On this point, too, the U.S. position prevailed.

Although by all accounts the U.S. Navy was skeptical in the beginning, it developed a keen liking for the agreement as its final terms were fashioned.<sup>4</sup> By nearly all accounts as well, the 1972 agreement is regarded as a success.<sup>5</sup> Since then, the Soviet Union has entered or is currently negotiating parallel bilateral INCSEAs with Britain, France, and the Federal Republic of Germany; and it is said to have explored possibilities (but as yet no specific proposals) with the People's Republic of China.<sup>6</sup> In May 1988, Greece and Turkey signed a bilateral INCSEA-like agreement in which the two agreed to "endeavor to avoid interfering with smooth shipping and air-traffic as ensured in accordance with international instruments, rules and regulations. This would contribute to the elimination of unwarranted sources of tension and reducing the risks of collision."<sup>7</sup>

## **THE INDIAN OCEAN "INITIATIVE"**

There was a second, although uneventful, U.S. naval arms control initiative in the 1970s as well. "As a clear signal to other nations that we could make progress towards peace," Jimmy Carter later wrote, "I wanted to work with the Soviet leaders to establish strict limits on the permanent deployment of naval forces in the Indian Ocean."<sup>8</sup> Interest in something along these lines had earlier been voiced by the area's littoral states in a declaration, promulgated at Lusaka in 1970, calling upon the United Nations to declare the Indian Ocean a "zone of peace," free of great power military presence.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Lynn-Jones, 1988, p. 488.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 497 ff; see also, Wolfowitz, 1983, p. 78; and Nunn and Warner, 1984, p. 135.

<sup>6</sup>The China discussions are reported in Foundation for International Security, "Moscow Conversations on the Limitations of Naval Activities and Confidence Building Measures at Sea," February 20, 1989, Oxfordshire, March 1989, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup>The Greece-Turkey agreement is discussed in North Atlantic Assembly, Political Committee, 1988, p. 43.

<sup>8</sup>Carter, 1982, p. 217.

<sup>9</sup>The 1970 declaration was followed one year later by a similar declaration embodied in a November 1971 UN General Assembly resolution. Notably, a few weeks after the General Assembly resolution, both the United States and the Soviet Union dispatched

By the late 1970s, both major powers had a "permanent" naval presence in the Indian Ocean. The Soviet navy made its first appearance in 1968 (a three-ship task force on port calls), established a permanent presence the following year, and, by the early 1970s, had about ten combatants (and about ten support ships) routinely on patrol in the area. The U.S. naval presence was longer and somewhat different in character. A three-ship Middle East Task Force (METF), home ported out of Bahrain, was established in 1949. In 1966, the United States and Britain agreed that certain Indian Ocean islands could and should be developed for military purposes. At about that time, three or four times a year, the United States began a pattern of deploying to the area carrier or other major surface combatant task forces. In the wake of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, U.S. deployments were increased in frequency and size, and the METF was modestly upgraded with a new flagship. In the mid-1970s, the United States began work on expanding naval support facilities on the British-owned island of Diego Garcia.

Carter's original idea in 1977 was in effect to "demilitarize" the Indian Ocean so far as nonlittoral navies were concerned, but Carter was virtually alone within his own administration. By the time Indian Ocean talks with the Soviet Union began in Moscow in June 1977, the U.S. proposal was more modestly cast in terms of freezing the U.S./Soviet naval presence at essentially its March 1977 levels.<sup>10</sup> This would leave the Soviet Union with an Indian Ocean presence of about 18 to 20 vessels, divided evenly between combatants and support ships, and the United States with its three-ship METF, periodic visits of naval task forces, and access to Diego Garcia as it then stood.<sup>11</sup>

The two sides reached early agreement on a number of matters. Such an arrangement would be bilateral,<sup>12</sup> limited in duration, and renewable. Also, there was no great disagreement, as a general matter, on what would be included (naval vessels, logistics support, and bases) and what would not (ground forces and commercial vessels).

On several points, however, the two sides did not agree. The Soviets wanted the agreement to cover facilities and U.S. strategic forces in Western Australia (which for

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naval forces to the Indian Ocean to symbolize their support for Pakistan and India, respectively. Haass, 1987, p. 233.

<sup>10</sup>Though, at the President's insistence, the "ultimate objective" was still to be demilitarization.

<sup>11</sup>Haass, 1987, pp. 236, 238.

<sup>12</sup>This meant, among other things, that the deployed naval forces of Britain and France would not be covered.

the United States was unacceptable, not least because it entangled the agreement with the U.S. ANZUS treaty commitments). The United States insisted (and the Soviet Union resisted) that the agreement reach, include, and limit land-based Soviet naval aviation (SNA), which was, or might in the future be, based in the Asian littoral.<sup>13</sup> Two other propositions were also sticking points. The Soviets wanted assurance that the United States would not use the Indian Ocean for "strategic" purposes; specifically, they sought a ban on any basing within the region of nuclear-capable bombers and submarines capable of reaching the Soviet homeland. Bombers were not troublesome to the United States (which had no plans or need for basing B-52s in the area),<sup>14</sup> but submarines were. The best the United States was prepared to offer on the second point was an informal understanding that the United States would not use the Indian Ocean for strategic submarine patrols. As Haass reports, "Whether this was enough for the Soviets was never determined."<sup>15</sup>

There was one final matter. "Surge" exceptions and "escape clauses" to protect "the special interests of either nation" in the region were discussed, evidently at U.S. initiative, but here too, no agreement was reached.

The Indian Ocean talks were short-lived. By early 1978, the Carter administration had become increasingly troubled by Soviet meddling in Ethiopia and elsewhere in the Horn of Africa. In February 1978, the United States unilaterally terminated the Indian Ocean talks. In the subsequent testimony of Leslie Gelb, Deputy Head of the U.S. delegation: "Soviet naval operations in support of their political activities in the Horn called into question whether we had a common understanding of how a stabilization agreement would actually affect the behavior of our two states."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>In Haass' words: "This was the *sine qua non* of the U.S. position. Without such a provision the Soviet Navy would have been able to operate under the protection of land-based Soviet naval aviation while the Soviet Air Force could introduce large and potentially decisive amounts of power into the area. Stabilization of force levels would limit U.S. air and power projection assets to the periodic appearances of carrier task forces; without some corresponding ceiling on Soviet land-based tactical air power, the United States and its allies in the littoral could have found themselves at a marked disadvantage." Haass, 1987, pp. 238-239.

<sup>14</sup>In 1977, Diego Garcia and all other facilities in the Indian Ocean area lacked the runway space to accommodate B-52s. U.S. B-52s operated out of Guam. It was not until 1985 that Diego Garcia was fitted to accommodate the U.S. bombers.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 238.

<sup>16</sup>U.S. Congress, *Indian Ocean Arms Limitations and Multilateral Cooperation on Restraining Conventional Arms Transfers*, Hearings, Panel on Indian Ocean Force Limitations and Conventional Arms Limitations of the Subcommittee on Intelligence and

Within two years of the initiative's demise, the Carter administration had expanded the METF from three to five combatants; Indian Ocean deployment of at least one aircraft carrier had become a permanent feature of U.S. naval presence in the area; Diego Garcia was undergoing new expansion; naval (and other military access) agreements had been negotiated with Somalia, Oman, and Kenya; U.S. ships to "pre-position" weapons and supplies for U.S. ground forces were positioned off Diego Garcia.<sup>17</sup>

### THE SIDELINES

INCSEA and the short-lived Indian Ocean talks were bilateral in character, but postwar interest in the subject has not been limited to the two superpowers. For this, it is useful to look briefly at the postwar world of navies as it has taken form by the late 1980s and also at the sidelines where much of the strongest interest has been manifested.

As in the past, the world of navies is both very large and remarkably small. It is large because most of the nations of the world have navies. It is small because very few of the world's navies have a reach much beyond inland and territorial waters. The vast majority are "coastal" or "brown-water" forces, "almost exclusively deployed in waters immediately adjacent to a nation's land territory[,] executing traditional naval tasks such as maritime self-defence, protection of sovereign interests in territorial waters, protection of national economic interests in offshore waters, maritime policing and counter-smuggling duties, local search and rescue, etc."<sup>18</sup> To the extent that they venture farther afield, the deployments are occasional, small, and normally made as port calls and courtesy visits. Although their sizes and dispositions may be of concern to immediate neighbors (and of big power strategic concern to the extent that the local waters they ply are of strategic interest), they are mainly not large or significant players on the world scene.

Beyond these limited navies, the universe shrinks rapidly. Only the United States and the Soviet Union can be said to have "global" navies that can be, and often are, deployed in most oceans of the globe on a continuous basis, with access to bases and

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Military Application of Nuclear Energy, Armed Services Committee, 1978; quoted in Haass, 1987, p. 238.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 242; Davis, 1982.

<sup>18</sup>The characterization is drawn from United Nations, 1986, p. 17.

logistical support to allow sufficient numbers of ships to maintain a presence far from home for extended periods. There is, however, a third category. "Blue-water" navies are "normally deployed in waters surrounding the state concerned, although often out to a significant distance from shore, and which also possess the capacity to conduct occasional deployments and limited operations in force distant from bases at home."<sup>19</sup> Scarcely a fleet-on-fleet match for either of the global navies, "blue-water" fleets are also few in number. There are perhaps 15 such in the world at present.

The small number of large navies should not obscure two other facts. First, coastal states with very limited numbers and sizes of ships nevertheless have imported or developed capabilities to place forces at sea, to project force upon the sea, and to defend against attacks from the sea. In the context of current weapon technology and ranges, "naval" for purposes of conceptualizing limitations can be a broadly encompassing term. Second, littoral states off whose shores the larger navies ply often have interests in naval limitations quite apart from direct and immediate concerns with naval power. Skittishness about nuclear-weapon carrying ships, concerns about expanding and exploiting offshore resources, and a general uneasiness at having foreign military forces in proximity but not under sovereign or international control have variously animated a larger community of interest in the regulation of naval activities.

## MULTILATERAL TREATIES

Apart from the 1958 Geneva Convention and the 1982 UN Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), five multilateral agreements affecting the seas were concluded in the postwar period. None of these aims directly at naval forces and naval activities *per se*. Indeed, each specifically excludes restrictions on naval operations. Yet the five are often cited by the East as precedents for future naval restrictions, and they form an important part of the legacy.<sup>20</sup>

The Antarctic Treaty of 1959 prohibits the carrying out of any military activity in Antarctica by demilitarizing the "area south of 60 degrees South Latitude, including all ice shelves." Article VI provides that "nothing in the Treaty shall prejudice or affect the rights, or the exercise of the rights, of any State under international law with regard to the high seas within that area."

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>For the texts of the first four, see United Nations, 1983. For a summary of the text of the fifth (Rarotonga), see Fly, in Ball and Mack, 1987, pp. 137-155.

The 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty<sup>21</sup> prohibits the carrying out by any party of nuclear weapons explosions, at any place under their jurisdiction or control, in or beyond the atmosphere or under water, including territorial waters and high seas. By the treaty's terms, the parties are also obliged to prohibit and prevent such explosions.

The 1971 Sea-Bed Treaty<sup>22</sup> prohibits the emplacement on the sea-bed and the ocean floor and in the subsoil thereof beyond a 12-mile sea-bed zone, "any nuclear weapons or any other types of weapons of mass destruction as well as structures, launching installations or any other facilities specifically designed for storing, testing or using such weapons." Parties to the treaty have the right to verify compliance through observation, but verification activities must not interfere with activities of the other parties and "shall be conducted with the regard for rights recognized under international law, including the freedoms of the high seas and the rights of the coastal States with respect to the exploration and exploitation of their continental shelves."

The 1976 Treaty of Tlateloco<sup>23</sup> is aimed at the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America, so that the region will be, in the words of the treaty's preamble, "forever free from nuclear weapons." The treaty covers the "territory" of the contracting parties, including the territorial sea, airspace, and any other space over which the party exercises sovereignty. The United States and France, in pledging to respect the treaty by acceding to its Protocol II, filed reservations to the extension of arms control measures into high seas areas, citing "recognized international law." The exception, for the transit of nuclear weapons through the zone, was recognized in 1967 by the Preparatory Commission for the Denuclearization of Latin America:

If the carrier is a State not a Party to the Treaty, transport is identical with "transit" which, in the absence of any provision in the Treaty, must be understood to be governed by the principles and rules of international law; according to these principles and rules it is for the territorial State, in the free expression of its sovereignty, to grant or deny permission for such transit in each individual case, upon application by the State interested in

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<sup>21</sup>Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, In Outer Space and Under Water, 1963.

<sup>22</sup>Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof, 1971.

<sup>23</sup>Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America, 1967.

effecting the transit, unless some other arrangement has been reached in a treaty between the states.<sup>24</sup>

Last, the 1985 Treaty of Rarotonga<sup>25</sup> aims to establish a South Pacific nuclear-free zone from the border of the Latin American zone in the east (Tlatelolco) to the west coast of Australia, and from the Antarctic area in the south roughly to the equator in the north. The treaty prohibits the presence, manufacture, and warhead testing of nuclear weapons anywhere within the territories of the South Pacific states, up to the 12-mile sea limit. But Article 5 of the treaty specifically allows each state to make an exception for nuclear weapons that may be aboard ships visiting its ports or navigating its territorial waters, and for weapons that may be aboard aircraft that are visiting its airfields or transiting its airspace.<sup>26</sup>

## DECLARATIONS

In addition to the foregoing, there have been a half-dozen nonbinding declarations entered into by various states, and covering various regions, in the course of the past 25 years, that are broadly relevant to present naval considerations.<sup>27</sup>

- Declaration on the Denuclearization of Africa, 1964. Members of the Organization of African Unity announced readiness to undertake, in an international treaty to be concluded under UN auspices, not to manufacture or acquire nuclear weapons.<sup>28</sup>
- Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, 1970. Adopted at the Third Conference of the Non-Aligned Countries in Lusaka on September 10, 1970, the declaration called upon all states to consider and respect the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace from which great power rivalries and competition

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<sup>24</sup>Quoted in Arkin, 1987, p. 33.

<sup>25</sup>South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty, 1985.

<sup>26</sup>The treaty is discussed in Fly, 1987.

<sup>27</sup>The six are discussed in United Nations, 1986, pp. 60-63.

<sup>28</sup>Since the declaration, the UN General Assembly has passed several resolutions calling upon its members to consider Africa a nuclear-free zone. See, for example, Resolutions 2033 (XX), December 3, 1965; 21/81, December 12, 1977; 33/63, December 14, 1978; 34/76 A, December 11, 1979; 35/146 B, December 12, 1980; 36/86 B, December 9, 1981; 37/74 A, December 9, 1982; 38/181 A, December 20, 1983; and 39/61, December 12, 1984.

should be excluded, proposed that all military and naval bases conceived within the context of these rivalries be removed, and declared that the area should be a nuclear weapon-free zone.

- South-East Asia as a Zone of Peace and Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, 1971. Adopted by the member states of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the declaration announced the parties' intention to secure international recognition of, and respect for, South-East Asia as a zone of peace, free of nuclear weapons.

Considering the vast sea areas and strategic international waterways that would be encompassed by such a zone, ASEAN countries believe that its eventual establishment in conformity with the provisions of the [UNCLOS] would constitute another significant regional contribution to the lessening of the naval arms race and the enhancement of economic co-operation and development in a vital region of the world.<sup>29</sup>

Declaration of Ayacucho, 1974. Signed by Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela in 1974, and ratified by the signatories in 1978, the declaration commits the parties to arms control, including naval arms, and the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

- South Pacific Forum, 1984. Adopted at Tuvalu in August 1984 as a prelude to Rarotonga, the parties agreed upon the desirability of a nuclear-free zone in the area, bearing in mind that such a zone, if established, would embrace large areas of the sea.
- Declaration on Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean, 1984. The Final Declaration of the Mediterranean Members of the Non-Aligned Movement at Valetta, September 1984, stated:

The Ministers also considered that the freedom of the high seas in a closed sea like the Mediterranean should be exercised scrupulously and exclusively for the purposes of peace, and that naval deployment, particularly by States outside the region, that directly or indirectly threatened the interests of non-aligned Mediterranean members should be excluded.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>United Nations, 1986, p. 62.

<sup>30</sup>Quoted *ibid.*

## **HELSINKI 1975, STOCKHOLM 1986**

Naval forces were explicitly excluded from the MBFR. At the West's insistence, naval operations were also kept largely off the table in the parallel pan-European talks on regulating military activities on the continent. But not entirely, in the latter case. The final act of the CSCE in 1975, the Helsinki Declaration, prescribes prenotification of "major military maneuvers exceeding a total of 25,000 troops, independently or combined with any possible air or naval components." The CSCE's Stockholm Document of 1986 expanded on these provisions but went no further with regard to naval forces and naval activities.<sup>31</sup> In the Stockholm negotiations, the Soviet Union proposed advance notification of all naval exercises, whether or not related to the exercises of other forces, whenever these exercises exceeded 30 ships and 100 aircraft. The West objected strongly. The Soviets agreed to defer the issue to a later time.

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<sup>31</sup>The Stockholm Document is discussed in Darilek, 1987, pp. 7-19.

## VI. THE LEGACY

Developments since 1986 are taken up in a companion Note.<sup>1</sup> There are several things to be said about the earlier record. First, the legacy is not as small or as antiquated as some contemporary accounts might suggest. The great naval disarmament experiments of the interwar period have their place in the history of naval arms limitations, but they are not the sum of that history, or even close to it. The larger part of that history has been directed at regulating naval activities rather than trying to directly control (or reduce) naval inventories. The period after 1940 has had less (and generally less ambitious) arms control efforts in the naval arena, but the record did not end at Pearl Harbor.

Second, although freedom of navigation has been a long-cherished principle of the major naval powers, it is scarcely an absolute. Much of the debate (and conflict) of the past was a contest between the freedom of some (neutral) naval states to go where they wanted unmolested and the prerogative of other (belligerent) naval powers to interpose force to interrupt such freedom of movement in pursuit of national security interests. Freedom of navigation was not an absolute in another sense as well. The naval powers, including the United States, found it in their interest at times to agree to limitations on their rights to ply the waterways of the world. In this, they acknowledged that freedom of navigation can be enhanced as well as hamstrung by negotiated regulations.

Third, with very few exceptions, parties to negotiations and agreements behaved quite rationally. They agreed to limitations when they perceived that to be in their interest, objected to constraints that detracted from or did not advance those interests, and reacted to the behavior of others when it might place them at great disadvantage. With the benefit of hindsight, one can fault some of the political and strategical thinking of the time as myopic or misplaced, but that is scarcely a defect unique to this area. Perhaps the most glaring exception to the observation is Britain's behavior in much of the 1930s. Yet, so far as Germany was concerned, the greatest failure of the period was the unenforcement and collapse of the Versailles limitations. Britain's feeble after-the-fact naval deal with Germany may have exacerbated an already dangerous circumstance, but

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<sup>1</sup>Lacy, 1990.

it was neither the catalyst nor the most important contributor. By contrast, and given its strategic interests as they evolved over time, the United States cannot be said to have suffered (or to have suffered for very long) any similarly important lapses in logic, judgment or rationality.

To say this is not to suggest that the United States has always, regularly, or consistently been blessed with a special blend of strategic insight. Carter's Indian Ocean initiative was truncated by external political events. In their absence it could still not have gone forward because of unresolved issues separating the parties (on this, of course, one will never be able to do more than guess). Still, like Britain in the 1930s, the United States in 1978–1979 pursued a quixotic course that history is not likely to recall with affection. Haass' verdict on this count is as precise as any.

An arms control arrangement of the sort envisioned by the Carter administration would have limited U.S. ability to maintain peacetime presence and severely reduced U.S. capacity to introduce and support augmented forces in changed circumstances or crises—all in a part of the world where the USSR enjoyed decided geographic advantages and where a number of local states possessed the strength to jeopardize U.S. interests. An agreement in 1978 could have created as well a false sense of security for the United States on the eve of the crisis in Iran and just a year before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup>

Here, again, however, post hoc strategic verdicts and the operative circumstances of the day are not necessarily one and the same. Unlike AGNA in the 1930s, the Indian Ocean initiative was stillborn. If Carter's initiative had materialized (in what actual terms one can only speculate),<sup>3</sup> would anything have been different in any strategically important sense? Maybe. Maybe not.

Fourth, the record of naval limitations is by and large devoid of singularly powerful lessons or simply summarized conclusions, cause for neither unconstrained optimism nor pervasive dismay. Neither the sum of the historical record nor any of its parts demonstrates persuasively that naval arms control (or any naval arms control variant) is *prima facie* a good thing. More was attempted than ever entered into force. Few agreements have endured over time, and those that have (Rush-Bagot, Montreux)

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<sup>2</sup>Haass, 1987, p. 242.

<sup>3</sup>Whether, for example, the U.S. would have agreed to Indian Ocean limitations without a surge "exception" or escape clause to allow it to respond to provocations by third parties—and what such terms would have encompassed—remains very speculative.

cannot be said to have had anything near an unblemished record of compliance. Agreements may have channeled (and not unusefully made more visible) violative behavior on the part of certain states; they did not serve to brake it. Arms control agreements between and among the parties, especially when they do no more than regulate military activities in peacetime (as in the case of Montreux), are invariably among the first victims of open warfare.

By the same token, one searches the record in vain for evidence that naval limitations are disfunctional or opposed to the best interests of maritime nations. Though concerns about setting undesirable precedents pepper the record, there is little evidence that an agreement reached in one place at one time invariably sets up pressures to reach more agreements in more places. While history will always wonder about Britain's wisdom in the 1935 bilateral agreement with Germany, it cannot be said that the United States itself ever made a truly bad deal. In retrospect, the United States may have been better positioned in the early 1940s without the Washington and London treaties, but this is far from sure. Given the circumstances of the time, it stretches the imagination to suggest that Germany and Japan would have behaved differently, or that Britain and the United States would have acted very much differently, had there been no naval agreements. In any case, the United States was far from paralyzed by the agreements. Within the treaties' terms, as amended, the United States built an impressive number of ships in the 1930s. It adjusted to Japanese violations, slower than the Chief of Naval Operations at the time preferred but probably as fast and as extensively as the circumstances of the period allowed. Its delayed wartime start in the Pacific theater was the result of Pearl Harbor and the U.S. priority accorded to fleet operations in the Atlantic. The losses at Pearl Harbor had to do, in turn, with where and the way the fleet was stationed, not with the size or composition of the fleet itself.

Fifth, after 1945, naval arms control had to be different. The Navy was different and so was the world. Like the other U.S. military services, the Navy "went nuclear" in the early 1950s in a big way (a legacy it has only recently begun to come to terms with). Also, after 1945, the coin of the realm in naval arms control could no longer be ships alone. Technology expanded the currency (and, concomitantly, the complexity) to sea-based air and land-based "naval" systems, and the target list deep beyond the coastline. After 1950, the Navy's most frequent challenge consisted of Third World nations that

had little or no navies in the traditional sense of the term. But all this meant was that prewar conceptions of naval limitations had to be adapted to a different set of strategic and technologic circumstances. By the early 1970s, such U.S. naval arms control negotiations as there were focused on the Soviet navy in recognition that it was the only other "real navy" to negotiate with.

Sixth, the rest of the world has not stood by quietly. Although largely reduced to spectator status in the face of two (perhaps three) "global" navies, other states in various regions have certainly constituted a very vocal bleacher section. Though postwar multilateral agreements have been weak on naval aspects, and postwar declarations all too right-sounding and therefore easy to make, the constituency for naval limitations is a great deal larger than the constituency for avoiding the subject entirely.

Seventh, from the agreements the United States has entered into or allowed itself to be affected by, two lessons emerge. First, success or failure cannot be isolated from the broader political issues joining or separating the parties. Rush-Bagot could persevere without serious incident for nearly two centuries because of the enduringly good relations between the signatories. The Montreux Convention could not survive the opening of hostilities in Europe in 1939 precisely because it could not be separated from larger, urgent issues and interests. (For the same reason, Montreux could resume its place as soon as the war was over.) The Indian Ocean talks of the late 1970s could not be separated (and wisely, were not allowed to be separated) from Soviet naval behavior outside the area of negotiation. Further, certain agreements seemed to survive the mercurial temperament of the parties and the condition of their relations anyway. INCSEA is the most prominent case. In implementation, it has been carried on in strikingly routine fashion through the ups and downs of détente, retrenchment, and "détente-II." On the face of it, the two lessons seem to be inconsistent. All the juxtaposition suggests, however, is that national interests will be pursued, and, to the extent agreements either facilitate or do not get seriously in the way of the pursuit, they are less likely to be jettisoned, circumvented, or violated.

Last, while some in the postwar West make too light of the historical record, many in the East (and also in Europe) make too much. Although the aspirations have often been near-cosmic in their reach, most actual agreements have been very prosaic affairs,

concerned with real forces and real waters, often entangled in complexities and involved with details and technicalities.

A new chapter began under Mikhail Gorbachev in 1986—devoid of agreements but plentiful in proposals. It will be the subject of a future document.

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